B.R. 1736(2) RESTRICTED

NAVAL STAFF HISTORY
SECOND WORLD WAR

NAVAL OPERATIONS IN THE BATTLE OF CRETE

20th May—1st June 1941

(Battle Summary No. 4)

1960

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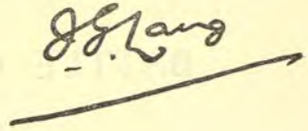

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Abbreviations

A.A.	Anti-aircraft
A.L.C.	Assault Landing Craft
Bs.	Battleship
C.O.	Commanding Officer
C.S.	Cruiser Squadron
Cr.	Cruiser
D (..)	Captain Commanding Destroyer Flotilla
D.E.L.	Defensive Electric Light
Dr.	Destroyer
M.A.S.B.	Motor Anti-Submarine Boat
M.G.	Machine Gun
M.L.	Motor Launch
M.L.C.	Motor Landing Craft
M.N.B.D.O.	Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation
M.T.B.	Motor Torpedo Boat
N.O.I.C.	Naval Officer-in-Charge
R.A.(D)	Rear Admiral Commanding Flotillas
R.D.F.	Radio Direction Finding (Radar)
S.A.A.F.	South African Air Force
S.O.	Senior Officer
S.S.	Special Service
T.L.C.	Tank Landing Craft
T.S.R.	Torpedo Spotter Reconnaissance
V.A.1	Vice-Admiral Commanding 1st Battle Squadron

Sources

1	M.013209/41	Narrative by the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean and covering letter (Battle of Crete). Enclosures to above.
2	M.015152/41	Narrative by the Commander-in-Chief Mediterranean, and covering letter (Evacuation).
3	Mediterranean War Diary, November 1940—May 1941.	
4	M.05521/41	Establishment of Naval Base at Suda Bay.
5	Suda Bay War Diary, November 1940—May 1941.	
6	M.011470/41	Damage and Loss of H.M.S. *York*.
7	M.012544/41	Loss of H.M.S. *Imperial*.
8	Headquarters,	R.A.F., Middle East Operational Summaries, April—May 1941.
9	A.01055/41	German airborne attacks on Corinth and Crete.
10	M.011435/41	Extract from report on loss of Maleme Aerodrome by Lieut. A. R. Ramsay, R.N.V.R.
11	Unofficial statement by Major-General B. C. Freyberg, V.C.	
12	Report on operations in Crete by Major-General E. C. Weston, R.M. (Enclosure to M.013209/41 above).	
13	Army Bureau of current affairs—" War "—No. 6.—29th November 1941.	
14	M.013220/41	Report from Lieut. A. W. F. Sutton, R.N., on defence of aerodromes in the light of experience at Maleme.
15	Navy Lists, April—June 1941.	
16	Remarks by Vice-Admiral E. L. King and Rear-Admiral H. B. Rawlings, June 1942.	
17	M.017366/41	Report of Inter-Service Committee on the Campaign in Crete.
18	N.I.D. 02421/42	F.A.A. in Air attack on Maleme.
19	Naval Staff History, *Mediterranean*, Vol. II.	
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23	*A Sailor's Odyssey*, by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Cunningham of Hyndhope.	

FOREWORD

BATTLE SUMMARY No. 4, *Naval Operations in the Battle of Crete*, was originally written in 1941.

Since then, enemy captured documents and other sources have revealed much that was not known at that time. This information has been made use of in the ensuing revision, and various minor errors in matters of fact which have come to light have been amended.

March 1960

CHAPTER I

Events leading up to the Battle

1. Introduction

ON 28TH OCTOBER 1940, Italy invaded Greece. This enabled Great Britain to make use of the Island of Crete as a much needed advanced base in the Eastern Mediterranean for sea and air operations against the Italians. The strategic importance of this Island had been fully appreciated, and the decision had been taken from the first to hold it whatever might happen on the mainland of Greece, though it was realised that in the event of Greece being overrun by the Germans, the use of Crete would be limited by the scale of air attack which might be brought to bear on it from Greek airfields. The day after the Italian invasion commenced, the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East[1], was authorised to send up to a Brigade to Crete, and in addition artillery and A.A. guns.

No time was lost in the Middle East, and two days later, (31st October) a convoy from Alexandria with a base defence party from H.M.S. *Liverpool*, coast defence guns, such underwater defence nets as were available and miscellaneous stores arrived at Suda Bay. By the 7th November, a battalion of the York and Lancaster Regiment, Bofors guns and crews, and 10,000 tons of military stores, including 3·7-inch H.A. guns, had been landed; a battalion of the Black Watch and a battalion of the Leicesters subsequently arrived, with certain other details, bringing the strength of the garrison up to 7,000[2]. By the end of the month, shore defences and a limited number of A.A. posts had been erected.[3]

Between November and April periodical air raids were carried out by the enemy on the Suda Bay and Heraklion areas, but they were not particularly heavy and little was achieved by them.

Until the German attack on Greece in April 1941, the port of Suda was used as a fuelling base by cruisers and destroyers.[4] For the latter it was of the greatest importance, enabling them to operate for long periods in the central Mediterranean. Later it filled the important functions of a supply base for the Army in Crete, until the evacuation of the Island at the end of May.

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[1] General Sir Archibald Wavell, K.C.B., C.M.G., M.C.

[2] The majority of the Greek Division in the island was withdrawn to Greece for service against the Italians.

[3] The state of coast and A.A. defences at the time of the German attack on Crete (20th May 1941) is shown in Appendix B and Plan 2. The manning of the coast defences was taken over from the *Liverpool's* party by the Army on 18th February 1941.

[4] Resources in the Mediterranean station did not permit of Suda Bay being adequately defended against under-water attack. It had been intended to set up the complete M.N.B.D.O. there: but delays on passage from the United Kingdom via the Cape of Good Hope prevented its arrival in the Eastern Mediterranean until the intensity of the German air attacks on Suda had become too great for the ships to be sent there. Only the A.A. guns of the organisation were landed and erected at Suda.

2. Air facilities in Crete (*Plan 1*)

On the arrival of the British in Crete there was only one airfield in the island, situated near Heraklion. This was not sufficiently developed to be used as a main operational base but was useful for refuelling flights between Egypt and Greece. During the British occupation of the island, this airfield was enlarged, and another site—to the south-eastward—was prepared by the Royal Air Force as a landing ground for bombers.

These airfields were too far from Suda Bay to operate fighter protection for that base, and a site at Maleme about eight miles to the westward of Canea was accordingly selected. It was taken over from the R.A.F. by the Fleet Air Arm, who did their utmost to develop it as an airfield, in spite of that crippling lack of time, labour, tools and material which was the bane of the preparations in Crete.[1]

The construction of airfields at five other places was started, but only one of these—at Retimo—was partially completed when the offensive commenced. There were no satellite landing grounds at Maleme, Retimo or Heraklion.

3. Organisation of Suda as a supply base for the Army

During March 1941, approximately two divisions of British and Imperial troops were transported from Egypt to Greece. On 6th April the Germans attacked Yugoslavia, and plans for the possible evacuation of these troops had to be prepared. Three days later, Major-General Weston, R.M.[2] and Captain Morse, R.N.[3] arrived at Suda to consider the problems of equipping the port for the reception of the British and Imperial troops, and the maintenance of their supplies and reinforcements.

Between the 18th and 29th April, the evacuation of some 50,000 British and Imperial troops from Greece took place; of these, some 25,000, the majority of whom had no equipment but rifles, were re-organised in Crete,[4] and formed the bulk of the defenders of the island against the subsequent airborne invasion.

The facilities for unloading supply ships in Suda Bay were poor. In addition, the harbour was subjected to frequent air attacks on an ever increasing scale, which caused heavy casualties among the ships unloading, and eventually precluded such operations except at night.[5] Indeed, the running of any

[1] It was used for Swordfish attacks on the Adriatic coast, and, in conjunction with Fulmars and a limited range Radar Station, for fighter protection.

[2] Major-General E. C. Weston, R.M.

[3] Captain J. A. V. Morse, D.S.O., R.N.

[4] Major-General Weston remarked in his report:— " Troops evacuated from Greece were in poor shape to undertake another campaign. Although in good heart, they had no equipment other than rifles and a small proportion of light automatics, and though retaining battalion nomenclature, strengths on the average did not exceed 350. No mess utensils were available . . . more serious was the extreme shortage of signal equipment, wire and entrenching tools, though the situation as regards the latter improved somewhat during the last week. The most serious shortage of all was in the matter of transport. A battalion which had one truck and one motor car allotted to it was lucky, and it was some time before cars could be found even for brigadiers."

[5] Night flying was seldom employed by the enemy, but on the 12th and 13th May about 12 aircraft flew over Suda. The attack gave the impression of being an experiment: a few bombs were dropped, and it was in general most ineffective. Referring to this attack, General Weston remarked:—" Failure was mainly due to the efficiency of No. 304 Searchlight Battery. Although only 13 lights were available for normal illumination, targets were picked up and held with remarkable accuracy up to heights of 15,000 feet. After experience in England with bad visibility and great heights, it was a revelation as to what efficient searchlights could do, given reasonable conditions.

Frequent changes of the 13 sites were made with the greatest efficiency, to obtain surprise and to prevent the enemy making use of past experience."

convoys at all to and from Crete was only carried out at considerable risk: and from the first, the problem of keeping up supplies caused anxiety. It required strenuous efforts on the part of Captain Morse, who on 23rd April had relieved Captain MacDonald[1] as Naval Officer in charge, Suda Bay, to solve the local difficulties.

Between 30th April and 20th May, though some 15,000 tons of army stores were unloaded from 15 ships, eight of them were sunk or damaged in harbour by air attack.

4. Army dispositions and defence plan, 30th April—20th May (*Plan 2*)

On 30th April Major-General Freyberg, V.C.,[2] assumed command of the British and Imperial Forces in Crete. For purposes of defence, the island was divided by him into two main areas, viz. Retimo to Maleme of which he retained the direct command, with headquarters at Canea, and Heraklion, a detached Command under Brigadier Chappell,[3] with the original British garrison of the island.

The Retimo-Maleme area was divided into three sectors. Retimo-Georgioupolis (inclusive) was under the command of Brigadier Vasey,[4] and was manned by Australian troops. Major-General Weston was in charge of the Suda sector, with British troops: this sector was from Georgioupolis to a line north and south through Canea bridge, and thence north and south along the river bed.

The Maleme sector, from the Suda sector westwards to Maleme airfield, was to be held by New Zealand troops under Brigadier Puttick.[5]

5. The air situation and the German plan, April—May 1941 (*Plan 3*)

It was only in April that the Germans decided to attempt an airborne invasion of Crete, and from then on their air attacks were intensified and steadily increased up to the date of the start of the operation.

The conduct of the enterprise was entrusted to General Löhr, the Commander of Luftflotte 4, which consisted of Fliegerkorps VIII—716 operational aircraft[6] —and the newly formed Fliegerkorps XI under General Student—530 transport aircraft with 72 gliders in addition, and about 13,000 parachute and airborne troops.[7]

By great exertion existing airfields were enlarged and new ones constructed in suitable places to accommodate and operate these large forces. Dive bombers and single engined fighters were concentrated forward, mainly at Malaoi, Milos and Scarpanto; twin engined fighters in the Athens area, within

[1] Captain M. H. S. MacDonald was appointed N.O.I.C. at Heraklion.

[2] Major-General B. C. Freyberg, V.C., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.

[3] Brigadier H. J. Chappell, M.C., T.D.

[4] Brigadier G. A. Vasey, D.S.O.

[5] Brigadier E. Puttick, D.S.O.

[6] Out of these 716 aircraft 514 were reported serviceable on 17th May. They consisted of:—
228 bombers.
205 dive bombers.
114 twin engined fighters.
119 single engined fighters.
50 reconnaissance.
Certain of these aircraft were at call from Fliegerkorps X.

[7] These troops consisted of the Assault Regiment (3 battalions of parachute and one of glider-borne troops), and the 7th Air Division (3 parachute rifle regiments and divisional troops).

200 miles of Crete; transport aircraft in Southern Greece, and bombers and reconnaissance aircraft further afield in Salonika, Bulgaria and Rhodes.[1]

Several plans as to where the air landings should take place were considered; eventually it was ruled by Reichs Marshal Goering himself that they should take place in the Maleme area in the morning of the first day, and at Retimo and Heraklion that afternoon.

A further 9,000 mountain troops including a tank battalion were detailed from the 12th Army[2] to follow up the airborne assault. The guns, tanks, and heavy stores were to be transported in two steamship flotillas, 6,500 lightly armed troops in two flotillas of caiques[3] and the remainder in transport aircraft.

By the middle of May the preparations were nearing completion, and on the 14th, heavy ground strafing attacks on Maleme and Heraklion airfields commenced; these attacks continued daily in crescendo until the 19th, (the day before the invasion), throughout the whole of which day they took place at regular half hourly intervals.

This imposed a very heavy strain on the Royal Air Force fighter force in Crete[4] the greater part of which was destroyed either in air combats, or on the ground. No reinforcements were available in Egypt,[5] and by the 19th there were only seven fighters remaining airworthy in the island. On that day, these were withdrawn to Egypt at the request of General Freyberg.

Bombers working from Egypt carried out frequent raids on the airfields in Greece which were being used and constructed by the Germans during the first three weeks of May;[6] but the distance from their objectives, and their limited numbers prevented them from interfering seriously with the enemy's arrangements.

Thus in Crete at the commencement of the airborne invasion the Germans had not only achieved complete command of the air, but had also succeeded in concentrating sufficiently large numbers of aircraft of all types to exploit it to the full.

These were the essential conditions of success, and without them it is scarcely possible that this form of invasion could by itself have succeeded.

[1] See Naval Staff History, *Mediterranean*, Vol. II.

[2] These consisted of 3 rifle regiments and various other units including a Panzer battalion and a motor cyclist battalion, and some A.A. detachments.

[3] Motor sailing vessels of sizes ranging from 50 to 200 tons and capable of a speed of 6 knots in favourable conditions. Being built of wood, they were found difficult to sink. One group of 25 caiques carrying 2,300 troops was to land at Maleme beach on the evening of 21st May: the other group of 38 caiques carrying 4,000 troops, at Heraklion the following evening.

[4] At the beginning of May, there were about 40 fighters in Crete: Blenheim fighters, Hurricanes and Gladiators. These had been evacuated from Greece, and, like the Army, were therefore not fully equipped; nor were there adequate repair and maintenance facilities in the Island.

[5] The shortage of fighter aircraft for the many commitments of the Royal Air Force in the Middle East had caused grave concern for several months. This shortage had been frequently pointed out to the authorities at home, by whom the situation was fully appreciated: but there were not at the time sufficient fighters available to make good the deficiency.

[6] The speed with which the enemy developed airfields in Greece and assembled there large air forces with stores and ground staff must have called for forethought and organisation of a very high order. Three weeks after the British evacuation of Greece, he was ready to commence his main airborne attack on Crete.

CHAPTER II

Naval dispositions to meet the expected attack

6. General considerations (*Plan 1*)

THE OBJECT of the Naval operations off Crete as defined by the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean,[1] was the prevention of seaborne landings on the coast of the island.[2]

Airborne invasion was known to be impending: but it appeared almost inconceivable that airborne invasion alone could succeed against forewarned troops. It was considered that seaborne support sooner or later would be required, and that the destruction of the reinforcing troop convoys would eventually win the day.

The most probable places for enemy landings were thought to be Canea, Retimo and Heraklion. Kissamo Bay and Sitia, at the western and eastern ends of the island were also possibilities.

The use of Suda Bay as an anchorage by day was limited by the heavy and ever increasing air raids. It was therefore necessary to operate naval forces from Alexandria, a distance of 420 miles from Suda.[3] In consequence a force had to be held in reserve at Alexandria, to meet the contingency of an attack developing when the ships at sea were running short of fuel.

Though the exact date of the attack could not be forecast, it was thought that the most probable date for it to be launched was about 17th May; naval forces were accordingly ready at sea from the 14th May onwards.

7. The naval air situation

The air situation was particularly unfortunate for the British Naval Forces. Owing to losses and wear and tear in recent operations, the *Formidable* was unable to provide fighter protection for them before the 25th May—five days after the battle started. As has been mentioned before, the few shore-based fighters still in Crete were being rapidly reduced by enemy air action, and could not be of any assistance (*see* Section 5). The Fleet was thus compelled to operate close to enemy air bases, without any fighter protection whatever.

[1] Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham, G.C.B., D.S.O.

[2] In addition to denying the Coast of Crete to the Germans arrangements had to be made for reinforcing and supplying British and Imperial troops ashore in the island.

[3] This made it essential to fuel the destroyers at sea from the battleships, which was done frequently during the operations. During oiling it was found possible to alter course in 5 degree steps without damaging the destroyers or straining the hawsers. On one occasion when a submarine contact required an immediate turn away it was found that provided a destroyer was on the inside, a ship could turn under steady helm. The reverse, i.e. with the destroyer on the outside, was not so easy.

8. Naval plan of operations (*Plan 3*)

The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, decided to control the operations from Alexandria, but the senior officers of the various forces at sea were given freedom to take independent action to intercept any enemy forces reported.

The general idea was for night sweeps to be carried out in the approaches to Crete, and in order to effect this four forces—" A ", " B ", " C " and " D "—were organised.[1] Force " B " consisting of two cruisers was to sweep the west coast of Greece from Cape Matapan to Sapienza Island (Lat. 36° 46′ N., Long. 21° 44′ E.): they were to deal with enemy forces to the north-westward of Crete, and were available to support Force " D ", if required. In the Aegean, Force " D " consisting of two cruisers and two destroyers was to sweep from Antikithera Island (17 miles to the north-westward of Crete) to Piraeus, and was to deal with any attempted landings to the westward of Retimo. Force " C ", which was composed of two cruisers and four destroyers, was to sweep north from Kaso (30 miles to the eastward of Crete) towards Leros (Lat. 37° 10′ N., Long. 26° 50′ E.). This force was responsible for the Heraklion and Sitia areas. All these forces were to be close north of Crete by dawn, and subsequently were to retire to the south of the island.

Support was to be provided by two battleships and five destroyers, which formed Force " A ", and were to maintain a position to the westward of Crete.

Suitable air reconnaissance was arranged, but it was very thin.

Two battleships, the aircraft carrier *Formidable*, four cruisers and 16 destroyers were in reserve at Alexandria; and the 5th Destroyer Flotilla (five destroyers) was at Malta.

In addition to these arrangements, the *Abdiel* was ordered to lay a minefield between Cephalonia and Levkas, (Lat. 38° 30′ N., Long. 20° 34′ E.) to interrupt enemy communication through the Corinth Canal, and the minelaying submarine *Rorqual* was to operate in the vicinity of Lemnos (Lat. 39° 50′ N., Long. 25° 15 ′E.). A flotilla of five M.T.Bs was based on Suda for inshore work.

9. Naval operations, 15th—19th May (*Plan 1*)

Measures were taken to put this plan into operation from 15th May onwards.

On the evening of 14th May, Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell, (V.A.1.)[2] wearing his flag in H.M.S. *Queen Elizabeth*, with Force A, consisting of the battleships *Queen Elizabeth*, *Barham*, Cruisers *Naiad* (flag of Rear-Admiral King),[3] *Phoebe*,[4] Destroyers *Jervis*, *Jaguar*, *Greyhound*, *Hasty*, *Nizam*, *Defender* and *Imperial* sailed from Alexandria for Cretan waters.

During the 15th, cover was provided for a convoy which was on passage from Crete to Alexandria, after which Force " A " proceeded to the supporting position between 80 and 100 miles to the westward of Crete.

Early on the 16th, Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell was joined by the *Ilex*, and later in the day by Force " B ", consisting of the cruisers *Gloucester* (Captain H. A. Rowley, Senior Officer), and *Fiji* and destroyers *Hotspur* and *Havock*, which had landed reinforcements at Suda the previous night. During the day the destroyers with Force " A " were fuelled from the *Queen Elizabeth*.[5]

[1] To avoid confusion, the composition of the various forces is repeated periodically throughout the narrative in abbreviated form, e.g. Force " A " (2 bs, 5 dr.): Force " B " (2 cr.).

[2] Vice-Admiral H. D. Pridham-Wippell, C.V.O.

[3] Rear-Admiral E. L. S. King, C.B., M.V.O.

[4] The *Phoebe* developed a defect which necessitated her return to Alexandria on the 15th, and her place in Force " A " was taken by H.M.A.S. *Perth*.

[5] Between the 16th and 19th May, 1,069 tons of oil were supplied by the *Queen Elizabeth* and 220 tons by the *Barham* to the 10 destroyers with Force " A ".

Rear-Admiral Glennie[1], R.A.(D), meanwhile with Force " C ", composed of the cruisers *Dido* (flag), and *Coventry* (A.A.), and destroyers *Juno*, *Kandahar*, *Kingston* and *Nubian*, was operating to the southward of Kaso Strait.

During the evenings of the 16th and 17th May, Force " D " under Rear-Admiral King, consisting of the cruisers *Naiad*, *Perth* and destroyers *Greyhound* and *Hasty*, and Force " B " were detached from Force " A " to close Crete in order to be ready to carry out the pre-arranged sweeps, if so ordered. Force " C " closed Kaso Strait for the same purpose. On each of these nights, the intelligence at the disposal of the Commander-in-Chief indicated that no enemy convoys were on passage, and consequently Forces " D " and " C " did not enter the Aegean.[2]

On the 17th May arrangements were made to relieve the forces at sea. At Alexandria, Rear-Admiral Rawlings[3] (C.S.7) shifted his flag to the *Warspite*, and sailed on the evening of the 18th with Force " A.1 ", consisting of the battleships *Warspite*, *Valiant*, cruiser *Ajax*, and destroyers *Napier*, *Kimberley*, *Janus*, *Isis*, *Hereward*, *Decoy*, *Hero* and *Griffin* to relieve Force " A ". This relief was effected to the south-west of Crete the next day, and Force " A ", having transferred the destroyers *Hotspur* and *Imperial* to Rear-Admiral Rawlings' command, returned to Alexandria.

Forces " B ", " C " and " D ", returned to Alexandria on the 18th,[4] completed with fuel, and sailed again for Crete on the 19th May.

10. Final reinforcements before the attack

During this period, some final reinforcements were landed in Crete. On the night of 15/16th May, the *Gloucester* and *Fiji* landed the 2nd battalion of the Leicester Regiment at Heraklion. At Tymbaki, on the south coast (Lat. 35° 05′ N., Long. 24° 47′ E.), 700 men of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were landed from the S.S. ship *Glengyle* on the night of 18/19, and on the following night, some few hours before the German attack opened, 3 " I " (infantry) tanks were landed from Tank Landing Craft No. 2.

[1] Rear-Admiral I. G. Glennie.

[2] This necessitated a large number of signals and counter-signals. Referring to this, the following signal by the Commanding Officer of the *Greyhound* to Rear-Admiral King is worth recording. " The road to Crete is paved with Night Intentions."

[3] Rear-Admiral H. B. Rawlings, O.B.E.

[4] It was during these operations that the first Victoria Cross to be awarded to the Mediterranean Fleet during the war was won by Petty Officer A. E. Sephton, A.A. director-gunlayer of H.M.S. *Coventry*. The *Coventry* formed part of Force " C ", under the command of Rear-Admiral Glennie. In response to a distress signal from the Hospital ship *Aba*, which was to the southward of Crete on passage to Haifa, Force " C " proceeded to her assistance. A determined dive bombing attack was carried out on the cruisers and *Aba* by 7 Ju. 87s. Petty Officer Sephton was mortally wounded by a machine gun bullet, but continued to work his director until the attack was over; he died the next day.

CHAPTER III

The German attack on Crete

11. Opening of the airborne attack on Crete, 20th May 1941

AT 0915, 20th May, just three weeks after the British withdrawal from Greece, the German attack on Crete commenced. This took the form of intense bombing of the Maleme airfield and Suda Bay areas, closely followed by the landing of troops by parachute, gliders and troop-carrying aircraft. The enemy's main objective appeared to be Maleme airfield,[1] but in the afternoon similar attacks developed at Heraklion and Retimo.

Fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place throughout the day on the Maleme airfield. At nightfall the situation appeared to be in hand, though about 1,200 of the 3,000 enemy who had landed by air were unaccounted for.[2]

12. Naval situation at dawn,[3] 20th May 1941

The position of the British Naval Forces at sea at daylight on 20th May, about a couple of hours before the attack, was as follows. Force " A.1 " (2 bs., 1 cr., 10 dr.) under Rear-Admiral Rawlings, was about 100 miles west of Crete.

Force " C ", consisting of the *Naiad*, wearing the flag of Rear-Admiral King, (C.S.15) *Perth*, *Kandahar*, *Kingston*, *Nubian* and *Juno* had reached Kaso Strait during the previous night, and was now withdrawing to the southward.

Rear-Admiral Glennie R.A.(D.) wearing his flag in the *Dido*, with the *Orion* (Force " D "), had reached the Antikithera Strait during the night, and was steering to join Force " A.1 ".

Force " B ", consisting of the *Gloucester* (Captain H. A. Rowley—Senior Officer) and *Fiji* was on passage from Alexandria to rendezvous with Force " A.1 ".

13. The Commander-in-Chief's intentions, 20th—21st May (*Plan 3*)

On learning that the attack on Crete had started, the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, at once ordered the forces at sea to move up towards the island, but failing further developments to keep out of sight of land.[4] In the course of the forenoon he signalled his intentions for the night.

[1] This was subsequently confirmed by captured enemy operation orders, in which the objectives for day 1 were stated to be Maleme, and then Suda.

[2] It is now known that the stiffness of the opposition came as an unpleasant surprise to the Germans. General Student regarded the situation that night (20th—21st) as critical, and took the bold decision to put the whole mass of the reserve of parachutists into action at Maleme airfield. " If the enemy had made a united all-out effort in counter-attacking that night . . . or in the morning of the 21st "—he subsequently wrote—" then the very tired remnants of the Sturm Regiments, suffering from lack of ammunition, could have been wiped out."

[3] On 20th May, Sunrise was at 0613, Sunset 2020; Nautical twilight: a.m. from 0510, p.m. till 2123. Zone-3 time was kept throughout the operations.

[4] Rear-Admiral Rawlings, " judging the enemy Air Force would be engrossed with Crete ", took the opportunity of fuelling his destroyers from the *Warspite* and *Valiant* during the day.

Force " B " (2 cr.), was ordered to pass close to Cape Matapan at 0400, 21st, and then to rendezvous with Force " A.1 " about 50 miles west of Crete at 0700.

Force " D ", augmented by the *Ajax* with the destroyers *Isis*, *Kimberley*, *Imperial* and *Janus* (3 cr., 4 dr.), was to pass through the Antikithera Channel to sweep the area Cape Malea (Lat. 36° 26′ N., Long. 23° 12′ E.)—Hydra (Lat. 37° 21′ N., Long. 23° 35′ E.)—Phalconera (Lat. 36° 50′ N., Long. 23° 54′ E.) and to be off Canea at 0700, 21st.

Force " C " (2 cr., 4 dr.), was to pass through Kaso Strait and sweep round Stampalia (75 miles north of Kaso) arriving off Heraklion by 0700, 21st.

Later on in the day air reconnaissance reported caiques in the Aegean, and these two sweeps were cancelled, as it was feared they might miss south-bound convoys in the darkness. Instead, Forces " C " and " D " were ordered to establish patrols to the east and west of Longitude 25° E., respectively. A new force of destroyers known as Force " E " under Captain P. J. Mack (D.14) in the *Jervis*, with *Nizam* and *Ilex* was to bombard the Italian airfield at Scarpanto (50 miles to the east of Crete), withdrawing to the southward before daylight.

14. Night operations, 20th—21st May (*Plan 1*)

Scarpanto airfield was bombarded at 0245, 21st May. The results could not be observed, but intelligence reports later indicated that two Do.17 aircraft were damaged. After examining Pegadia Bay (six miles to the northward of the airfield on the east coast of Scarpanto), and finding it empty, Force " E " retired to the southward.

The other operations ordered by the Commander-in-Chief were duly carried out, but no convoys were sighted. Force " C " was attacked by torpedo-carrying aircraft while approaching Kaso Strait at 2040, 20th, the torpedoes being avoided. An hour later six M.A.S. boats were encountered. The *Juno*, *Kandahar* and *Naiad* engaged them, and they retired with four of them damaged.

15. Naval situation at dawn, 21st May (*Plan 1*)

At daylight, 21st May, Force " A.1 " (2 bs., 6 dr.) was 60 miles west of Antikithera Strait, steering to the south-east to meet Force " D " (3 cr., 4 dr.), which, having sighted nothing during the night, was to the northward of Canea Bay, and withdrawing towards the Antikithera Channel. Force " B " was closing Force " A.1 " after an uneventful night sweep between Cape Matapan and Cape Elophonesi (the south-west point of Crete).

The *Abdiel* was returning to Alexandria after laying mines off Cephalonia.

At the eastern end of Crete Force " C ", having been joined by the *Calcutta* (A.A. cruiser) from Alexandria at 0600 (3 cr., 4 dr.), was retiring from the Aegean through the Kaso Strait. Force " E " (3 dr.) was to the southward of Scarpanto, under orders to join Rear-Admiral King (Force " C "), as was the A.A. cruiser *Carlisle*, which was on passage from Alexandria.

16. Operations during 21st May: loss of H.M.S. *Juno* (*Plan 1*)

During the 21st, Forces " A.1 ", " B " and " D " remained to the south-west of Kithera (2 bs., 5 cr., 10 dr.), every opportunity, between air attacks, being taken to refuel destroyers from the battleships. Rear-Admiral King with Force " C " cruised to the southward of Kaso Strait, where the *Carlisle* joined him from Alexandria during the afternoon: Force " E " was recalled to Alexandria.

Throughout the day the various squadrons were subjected to heavy air attacks. Force " C " in particular suffered several attacks from daylight onwards, and after withdrawing through the Kaso Strait, was bombed continuously from 0950 to 1350.

At 1249, the destroyer *Juno* was hit and sank in two minutes: six officers and 91 ratings were rescued by the *Nubian*, *Kandahar* and *Kingston*.

The attack on Force " C " was so incessant that no reliable estimate of the casualties inflicted on the enemy can be made, but at least two were damaged, and one was shot down.

To the west of Crete, Force " D " (3 cr., 4 dr.) was located at daylight, 21st, and heavily bombed while withdrawing towards Force " A.1 ", the *Ajax* and *Orion* both suffering damage from near misses. Force " A.1 " was attacked once during the forenoon, and for two and a half hours during the afternoon: this latter bombing was shared by Forces " B " and " D ", which were then in company. In the course of these engagements, two aircraft were probably shot down.

No seaborne landing had as yet taken place, but during the afternoon air reconnaissance reported groups of small craft, escorted by destroyers, moving towards Crete from Milos (80 miles north of Retimo). Forces " B ", " C " and " D " were accordingly ordered into the Aegean to prevent landings during the night: if there were no developments, Forces " C " and " D ", in the eastern and western areas respectively, were to commence working northwards on a wide zigzag at 0530 on the 22nd, to locate convoys.

Force " A " followed Force " D " well into Antikithera Channel as A.A. support, turning to the westward at sunset to patrol for the night in the supporting area. As the two forces parted company a sharp attack by four Ju 88s was made on Force " D ", which shot down three of them—" a pleasing start to the night's operations," (Rear-Admiral Glennie's report).

17. Force " D " breaks up troop convoy: night 21st—22nd May (*Plan 1*)

At 2330, 21st May, when some 18 miles north of Canea, Rear-Admiral Glennie with Force " D " (which now consisted of the cruisers *Dido*, *Orion*, *Ajax*, and destroyers *Janus*, *Kimberley*, *Hasty* and *Hereward*), encountered an enemy troop convoy composed mainly of caiques, escorted by a torpedo boat. The caiques, which were crowded with German troops, were engaged for two and a half hours.[1] In all, at least a dozen caiques, two or three steamers, and a steam yacht were sunk, or left burning. It was estimated that about 4,000 German troops were accounted for.[2] In addition, the Italian torpedo boat *Lupo* after firing torpedoes at the cruisers, was damaged by a broadside from the *Ajax*.

After taking a further sweep to the east and north, Rear-Admiral Glennie decided that, in view of the serious shortage of A.A. ammunition,[3] and the scale of air attack to be anticipated next day, he was not justified in keeping his force in the Aegean to carry out the intended sweep to the northward at daylight. He accordingly turned to the westward at 0330, 22nd. His ships, which had become considerably scattered during the action were given a rendezvous some 30 miles west of Crete. This decision, together with the

[1] Radar proved invaluable in leading our ships on to fresh targets.

[2] An over-estimate: about 800, of whom some were rescued later.

[3] A.A. ammunition remaining: *Dido*, 30%: *Orion*, 38%: *Ajax*, 42%.

result of his attack on the convoy, he reported to the Commander-in-Chief, who ordered Force " D " to return to Alexandria with all despatch.[1]

Meanwhile Force " B ", (*Gloucester*, *Fiji*, *Griffin* and *Greyhound*), had been ordered by the Commander-in-Chief to leave their patrol off Cape Matapan, and to proceed with despatch to Heraklion, where part of the town and harbour was reported to be in enemy hands. These orders reached the *Gloucester* too late to be carried out, but the force entered the Aegean and at daylight was about 25 miles north of Canea. Nothing was sighted, and they retired to the westward on Force " A.1 ". Force " B " was attacked almost continuously by dive bombers for an hour and a half from 0630 onwards, but escaped with slight damage only to each cruiser, and joined Force " A.1 " at 0830, 22nd May.

18. Naval situation at dawn, 22nd May

At daylight on 22nd May, the position of the Naval Forces at sea was as follows. Rear-Admiral Rawlings' Force " A.1 " (2 bs., 6 dr.) was about 45 miles south-west of Kithera, steering to the north-westward, and shortly to be joined by Forces " D " and " B " from the Aegean. Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten (D.5) in the *Kelly*, with *Kashmir*, *Kipling*, *Kelvin* and *Jackal* had sailed from Malta the previous evening, and was on passage to join Admiral Rawlings at 1000, 22nd. Captain H. M. L. Waller (D.10) in the *Stuart*, with the *Voyager* and *Vendetta*, and Captain P. J. Mack (D.14) in the *Jervis*, with the *Nizam* and *Ilex* were on passage from Alexandria to join Forces " A.1 " and " C " respectively. Force C (4 cr., 3 dr.) was off Heraklion, about to sweep to the north-westward in search of enemy troop convoys.

The 22nd May was to prove an expensive day for the British naval forces, costing them two cruisers and a destroyer sunk, and leading directly to the situation which occasioned the loss of two further destroyers early next morning. In addition, two battleships were hit by bombs, and two other cruisers damaged. On the other hand, the enemy was prevented from making any seaborne landing, and that so effectively as to deter him from any further attempts to do so, until the fate of Crete had been decided by his airborne troops.

19. Force " C's " encounter with convoy. A.M. 22nd May (*Plan 1*)

Rear-Admiral King, with Force " C " had spent the night of 21/22 May patrolling off Heraklion. Nothing was sighted, and at dawn the force formed up to carry out the sweep to the northward ordered by the Commander-in-Chief. Air attacks on the Squadron commenced at 0700, 22nd, and were continued without intermission. At 0830 a single caique carrying German troops was sighted. This caique was sunk by the *Perth*, and as she was being heavily attacked by enemy aircraft, the *Naiad* turned back to support her. A small merchant vessel, reported by the *Calcutta* at 0909, was dealt with by the destroyers.

At 1000, 22nd May, Force " C ", (4 cr., 3 dr.) was 25 miles south of Milo (90 miles north of Retimo). The *Perth* had rejoined the rest of the force but the *Naiad* was being heavily attacked and was still some way astern. Ten minutes later an enemy torpedo boat,[2] with four or five small sailing vessels was

[1] The Commander-in-Chief, while endorsing R.A.(D)'s decision to withdraw the *Dido* and destroyers, considered that the *Ajax* and *Orion* should have been left. These two cruisers were comparatively well off for ammunition, and would have proved an invaluable support to Force " C " in the situation which developed in the Aegean a few hours later.

[2] The Italian *Sagittario*.

sighted to the northward. The British destroyers gave chase, while the *Perth* and *Naiad* engaged the torpedo boat, causing her to retire behind smoke. The *Kingston* engaged another destroyer, who was laying a smoke screen, at 7,000 yards range, claiming two hits: she also reported a large number of caiques behind the smoke.

Force " C " was by then running short of H.A. ammunition. Air attacks were incessant and the force had to be kept together for mutual support. Its speed was limited, owing to the *Carlisle* being unable to steam at more than 21 knots.

For these reasons, Rear-Admiral King considered that he would jeopardise his whole force if he proceeded any further to the northward. He therefore decided to withdraw to the westward, and ordered the destroyers to abandon the chase.[1] A signal from the Commander-in-Chief (timed 0941), which showed that this convoy was of considerable size, was not seen by him until 1100. The brief action did, however, cause the enemy to turn back, and the troops, if ever they reached Crete at all, were not in time to influence the battle.

During its withdrawal to the westward, Force " C " was continuously bombed for three and a half hours. The *Naiad* due to avoiding action had been unable to overtake the remainder and had two turrets put out of action. Several compartments were flooded by near misses, and at 1125, her speed being reduced to 16-19 knots, the remainder of the force was ordered back to her support.[2] The *Carlisle* was hit, and her Commanding Officer, Captain T. C. Hampton, was killed, but the ship was not seriously damaged. T/B air attacks were made at 1258 and 1315 but the torpedoes were avoided. At 1321, Force " C " sighted Force " A.1 " coming up the Kithera Channel from the westward.

20. The junction of Force " A.1 " with Force " C " 22nd May (*Plan 1*)

On learning that Rear-Admiral King would be withdrawing through the Kithera Channel, Rear-Admiral Rawlings had decided that he would meet him in that neighbourhood. Accordingly, after being joined by Forces " B " (2 cr., 2 dr.) and " D ",[3] (3 cr., 4 dr.) he spent the forenoon patrolling between 20 and 30 miles to the westward of the channel, " apparently ", to use his own words, " serving a useful purpose by attracting enemy aircraft ".

The ammunition situation was causing anxiety, and rigid economy was ordered.[4] It was noticeable that the more exact and deliberate A.A. fire which resulted was far more effective in turning the enemy than had been the somewhat indiscriminate fire the previous afternoon.

At 1225, Rear-Admiral Rawlings heard from Rear-Admiral King that the *Naiad* was badly damaged and in need of support. He immediately decided to enter the Aegean, and steered for the Kithera Channel at 23 knots. A.A.

[1] This decision of C.S. 15 was regretted by the Commander-in-Chief, who remarked—" The Rear-Admiral Commanding Fifteenth cruiser squadron was presented with a unique opportunity of effecting its (the convoy's) destruction, but, most regrettably, he allowed himself to be turned from his object by the weight of the enemy's air attack. The situation was undoubtedly a difficult one for him, as this attack was certainly on a majestic scale, but it appears that no diminution of risk could have been achieved by retirement, and that, in fact, the safest place for the Squadron would have been among the enemy ships."

[2] During 2 hours of this period 181 bombs were aimed at the *Naiad*.

[3] Force " D " was detached to Alexandria during the forenoon on receipt of orders from the Commander-in-Chief.

[4] Amount of H.A. ammunition remaining at 0930/22:—

Warspite	66%	*Gloucester*	18%	*Dido*	25%
Valiant	80%	*Fiji*	30%	*Orion*	38%
				Ajax	40%

shell bursts from the sorely pressed Force " C " were sighted at 1312, and a few minutes afterwards a large caique was seen between Pori and Antikithera Islands, to the south of the Channel, which the *Greyhound* was ordered to sink.

At 1332, just as Forces " A.1 " and " C " were meeting, the *Warspite* was attacked by three Me. 109s and hit by a bomb[1] which wrecked the starboard 4-inch and 6-inch batteries and damaged number three boiler room fan intakes, thereby reducing the ship's speed. Both forces then withdrew to the south-westward, air attacks continuing intermittently most of the afternoon.

21. Loss of H.M. Ships *Greyhound*, *Gloucester* and *Fiji*, 22nd May (*Plan 1*)

The *Greyhound*, meanwhile, after sinking the caique, was returning to her place in Force " A.1's " screen, when at 1351 she was struck by two bombs, and sank stern first 15 minutes later. The *Kandahar* and *Kingston* were at once detached from Force " C " to pick up survivors, and shortly after 1400, Rear-Admiral King (who was the Senior Officer of the forces present) ordered the *Fiji* and *Gloucester* to give them their A.A. support, and to stand by the wreck of the *Greyhound*. These rescuing ships, and the men swimming in the water were subjected to almost continuous bombing and machine gun attacks;[2] the *Kingston* was damaged by three near misses.

At 1413 Rear-Admiral King asked Rear-Admiral Rawlings for close support,[3] as Force " C " by that time had practically no A.A. ammunition left. Force " A.1 " closed at the *Warspite's* best speed (18 knots), and Rear-Admiral Rawlings, who was feeling uneasy about the orders given to the *Gloucester* and *Fiji*, informed Rear-Admiral King of the depleted state of their H.A. ammunition of which the latter was not aware. At 1457 Rear-Admiral King ordered the rescuing ships to withdraw at discretion, leaving boats and rafts if air attack prevented the rescue of survivors.

At 1530, the *Gloucester* and *Fiji* were coming up astern of the *Warspite* at high speed, engaging enemy aircraft; 20 minutes later, the *Gloucester* was hit by several bombs and brought to a full stop. She was badly on fire, and her upper deck was a shambles. In view of the intensity of the air attacks the Captain of the *Fiji* (Captain William-Powlett) reluctantly decided that he must leave her.[4] All available boats and floats were dropped, and the *Fiji* proceeded to the southward with the *Kandahar* and *Kingston*, still being hotly attacked by enemy aircraft.

At 1710, the *Fiji* reported that she was in position 24 miles 305° from Cape Elophonesi (the south-western point of Crete) steering 175°, 27 knots, a position 30 miles due east from Forces " A.1 " and " C ", which were steering 215°.

At 1845, after having survived some 20 bombing attacks by aircraft formations

[1] This was described by an eye witness as being a " beautiful attack to watch." The attack, which came suddenly out of low clouds, was carried out with great determination, the three machines coming dead end on down the fore and aft line. The leader's bomb hit in the vicinity of S.1—4-inch mounting.

[2] Two Me. 109s machine gunned the *Kingston's* whaler, killing three officers and several ratings, and wounding every one in the boat.

[3] Owing to the dense smoke from the *Warspite's* damaged boiler room, Force " A.1's " alteration to the south-westward had to be made away from Force " C ", thereby opening the distance of the forces to 4 miles.

[4] It was hoped that some of the *Gloucester's* ship's company might have reached the coast of Crete. Captain Rowley lost his life.

during the last four hours, she fell a victim to a single Me. 109.[1] The machine flew out of the clouds in a shallow dive, and dropped its bomb very close to the port side, amidships. The ship took up a heavy list, but was able to steam at 17 knots until half an hour later when another single machine dropped three bombs, which hit above " A " boiler Room; the list increased, and at 2015, having by then expended all her 4-inch ammunition, except six star shell, the ship rolled right over. She was then approximately in Lat. 34° 45′ N., Long. 23° 12′ E., about 50 miles W.S.W. from Gavdo Island.[2]

The *Kandahar* (Commander W. G. A. Robson) and the *Kingston* (Lieut. Comdr. P. Somerville) dropped boats and floats, and withdrew to the southward to avoid almost certain damage from air attacks. They returned after dark and succeeded in picking up 523 officers and men.[3] It was during this rescue work that Commander W. R. Marshall-A'Deane, the Captain of the *Greyhound*, who had been picked up by the *Kandahar* earlier in the day, dived overboard to the assistance of a man who was in difficulties. Commander Marshall-A'Deane was lost sight of in the darkness, and never seen again.[4]

These two destroyers had been subjected to no fewer than 22 air attacks between 1445 and 1920, and were then running short of fuel. At 2245 they left the scene of the loss of the *Fiji*, and shaped course to rendezvous with Rear-Admiral King to the southward of Crete.

22. Night operations, 22nd—23rd May (*Plan 1*)

Meanwhile, Rear-Admiral King with Forces " C " and " A.1 " (2 bs., 4 cr., 8 dr.) had been steering to the south-westward. Spasmodic air attacks continued till dusk, and the *Valiant* was hit aft by two medium bombs at 1645 though no serious damage was sustained. Course was altered to the southward at 1800, and to the eastward at 2100.

Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten in the *Kelly*, with *Kashmir*, *Kipling*, *Kelvin* and *Jackal* had been delayed on his passage from Malta by a promising submarine hunt, and only effected his junction with Force " A.1 " at 1600, 22nd. At 2030, the *Kelly*, *Kashmir* and *Kipling* were detached to search for survivors from the *Fiji*, and half an hour later, the *Kelvin* and *Jackal* were sent to try to pick up any of the *Gloucester's* crew who could be found. Subsequently,

[1] Commenting on the experiences of the *Fiji* throughout this day, Captain William-Powlett remarked:—

1. Cruisers travelling at high speed and taking full avoiding action can elude a large number of dive bombing attacks.
2. Whilst the immediate effect of A.A. gunfire was not observed, the deterrent effect was marked. The 6-inch particularly caused the dive bombers to release early, and, as ammunition became short, the attacks were pressed further and further home.
3. Ships damaged by air attacks in areas where further intense attack is to be expected should be treated as ships torpedoed. Extensive rescue operations only endanger further men and ships.
4. Throughout the day, until the very end, no attack approached unobserved: this enabled aircraft to be engaged in good time, and adequate avoiding action to be taken. It was an unobserved attack which finally immobilised the ship. R.D.F. (Radar) was out of action almost the whole day, but A.A. lookouts, after a taste of bombing developed eyes which missed nothing. The danger of low cloud is emphasised.

As regards Radar, Rear-Admiral Rawlings remarked that in Cretan waters it was of no use, owing to land echos. A special warning about this was issued to Force " A1 ", as lookouts tend to become " R.D.F. minded."

[2] This position is a mean between the *Fiji's* position worked up from her 1710 position (allowing 10% reduction of speed for avoiding action) and position given by the *Kandahar*, (Lat. 34° 29′ N. Long. 23° 18′ E.).

[3] 32 Officers, 491 men out of 48 Officers, 732 men.

[4] His Majesty The King approved the posthumous award of the Albert Medal to Commander Marshall-A'Deane.

however, these searches were cancelled and the 5th Flotilla was ordered to patrol inside Kissamo and Canea Bays.

On arrival at the Antikithera Channel, the *Kipling* developed a steering defect, and was detached to join Force " A.1 ". Later on, as the defect was remedied, her Captain decided to remain to the south-west of Crete, where he anticipated he would be able to rendezvous with Captain D.5 on his withdrawal in the morning. To this fortunate decision, Captain D.5 and over 250 of his men in all probability were to owe their lives.[1]

Continuing into Canea Bay, the *Kelly* and *Kashmir* fell in with a troop-carrying caique, which they damaged badly by gunfire. They then carried out a short bombardment at Maleme and, whilst withdrawing, they engaged and set on fire another caique.

The N.O.I.C. Suda had meanwhile reported some lights in Canea Bay. These lights the *Kelvin* and *Jackal*, who were operating in Kissamo Bay, were ordered to investigate, and finding them to be shore lights, proceeded independently for Alexandria informing the Commander-in-Chief of this intention at 0300.

Towards the eastern end of the Island, Force " E ", consisting of Captain P. J. Mack in the *Jervis*, with *Ilex*, *Nizam* and *Havock* maintained a patrol off Heraklion without incident, returning to Alexandria in the morning.[2] On the way they were bombed for five hours, the *Ilex* and *Havock* being damaged by near misses.

During the night, the *Decoy* and *Hero* embarked H.M. the King of Greece, who had narrowly escaped capture by the Germans, H.B.M. Minister and other important personages at Agriarumeli on the south coast of Crete (Lat. 35° 14′ N. Long. 23° 58′ E.) The embarkation was effected successfully, after which the two destroyers sailed to join Rear-Admiral King to the southward.

In the meantime, Forces " C " and " A.1 " were some 75 miles to the southward of Crete, steering 110°. At 0100, Force " C " (4 cr., 1 dr.) parted company and shaped course for Alexandria. Some hours previously, Rear-Admiral Rawlings had signalled to the Commander-in-Chief suggesting that a rallying point further to the east would be better than one to the southwest of Kithera[3]; if this were approved, it was suggested that Captain D.5 should make his withdrawal from Canea Bay to the eastward, and that the Commander-in-Chief should issue orders accordingly to all forces. Force " A.1 " therefore continued steering 110° till 0400, 23rd, when, no reply having been received from the Commander-in-Chief, course was altered to the north-westward. Rear-Admiral Rawlings was about to signal a rendezvous to the southwest of Cape Elophonesi when a message was received ordering the withdrawal of all forces to Alexandria.[4] He accordingly set course for Alexandria at 15 knots, informing scattered units of his position, course and speed at 0530.

[1] See section 25.

[2] It had been the intention of the Commander-in-Chief to reinforce this Force with the *Ajax* and *Orion*, which were on passage back to Alexandria with Rear-Admiral (D), but the signal did not get through in time.

[3] Rear-Admiral Rawlings based this suggestion on the proximity of the western end of Crete to the main German air bases in Greece. and on the reduction in the value of Force " A.1 " as a support. He had no cruisers, and the *Warspite* and *Valiant* had both been hit by bombs the previous day.

It was clear to him that the German Air Force asked for no better targets than isolated units, and a strong point further east would enable the greatest number of ships to be concentrated for mutual support.

[4] Rear-Admiral Rawlings stated that the signal " lag " throughout these operations was very bad, and considered it should be recognised that when the C.-in-C. is conducting operations from on shore, far more signal lines etc., will be required.

23. The Commander-in-Chief orders withdrawal to Alexandria, 0408, 23rd May

At 2230/22, the Commander-in-Chief had received a "Most Immediate" message from Rear-Admiral Rawlings reporting the loss of the *Gloucester* and *Fiji*, and giving details of the ammunition situation. Owing to a calligraphic error in Alexandria this signal made it appear that the battleships of Force "A.1" had no pom-pom ammunition left: and orders were given at 0408, 23rd, for all forces to retire to the eastward.

In actual fact, the battleships had plenty of ammunition. Had the Commander-in-Chief been aware of this, they would not have been ordered to Alexandria, and would have been available as a support and rallying point for the 5th Destroyer Flotilla in the morning of the 23rd.[1]

24. Naval situation at dawn, 23rd May

Dawn on 23rd May found the naval forces in the waters around Crete considerably scattered. To the eastward, Captain Mack with Force "E" (4 dr.) was north of Crete, returning to Alexandria through Kaso Strait. Rear-Admiral Glennie, in the *Dido* was just arriving at Alexandria, with the *Ajax* and *Orion* some distance astern of him. The S.S. ship *Glenroy*, with reinforcements on board, escorted by the *Coventry*, *Auckland* and *Flamingo* had left Alexandria the previous afternoon, and was about 130 miles out, steering for Tymbaki, (Lat. 35° 05′ N. Long. 24° 47′ E.).

Forces "A.1" (2 bs., 7 dr.) and "C" (4 cr., and 1 dr.) were about 25 miles apart to the south of Crete, returning to Alexandria: the *Kandahar* and *Kingston*, with the *Fiji's* survivors on board, were shortly to join Force "C". The *Decoy* and *Hero*, with the King of Greece on board, were to the northward of Force "A.1" which they joined at 0745.

Farther to the west, Captain Waller in the *Stuart*, with the *Voyager* and *Vendetta*, who had been ordered by Rear-Admiral Rawlings to search for survivors from the *Fiji*, was somewhere to the southwest of Gavdo Island, as were also the *Jaguar* and *Defender*, which had left Alexandria the day before with munitions for the Army.

The *Kelvin* and *Jackal* were to the southwest of Crete returning to Alexandria, and the *Kipling* was also in this vicinity hoping to rejoin the *Kelly* (Captain D.5) and *Kashmir*, who had cleared Canea Bay and were retiring close to the west coast of Crete.

25. Loss of H.M. Ships *Kelly* and *Kashmir*, 23rd May. (*Plan 1*)

Captain Lord Louis Mountbatten had been withdrawing at full speed since dawn. At 0755, after surviving two air attacks without suffering damage, he was about 13 miles to the southward of Gavdo (Lat. 34° 50′ N. Long. 24° 05′ E.). Here he was attacked by 24 Ju. 87 dive bombers. The *Kashmir* (Commander H. A. King) was hit and sunk in 2 minutes. A large bomb struck the *Kelly* while she was doing 30 knots under full starboard rudder: she turned turtle to port with considerable way on, and after floating upside down for half an hour, finally sank. In accordance with their practice, the dive bombers machine-gunned the men in the water, killing and wounding several.

This attack was witnessed by the *Kipling* (Commander A. St. Clair-Ford), who at the time was some 7 or 8 miles to the southward. She immediately closed, and succeeded in picking up 281 officers and men from the water,[1] including Lord Louis Mountbatten and Commander King, eventually leaving the scene for Alexandria at 1100. She was considerably hampered in this rescue work by six high level bombing attacks and it was subsequently estimated that between 0820 and 1300 no less than 40 aircraft attacked her, dropping 83 bombs, though she emerged from the ordeal unscathed.[2]

In these engagements the 5th Destroyer Flotilla shot down at least two, and damaged at least four enemy aircraft.

[2] The Commander-in-Chief subsequently was of the opinion that this might well have prevented the loss of the *Kelly* and *Kashmir*.

26. Return of the British naval forces to Alexandria, 23rd May

In the meantime, Force "C" (4 cr., 1 dr.) had been joined by the *Kandahar* and *Kingston*, with the *Fiji's* survivors on board, at 0630, 23rd. Both these destroyers were well nigh out of fuel.[3] Learning that Force "A.1" (2 bs., 7 dr.) was only 25 miles to the north-west, Rear-Admiral King closed, and the destroyers were fuelled from the battleships. Shortly after 0800, a signal was received from the *Kipling* reporting the loss of the *Kelly* and *Kashmir*: the Admiral reluctantly decided that he could send no help to her from Forces "A.1" and "C".[4]

The *Decoy* and *Hero*, with the Greek Royal party on board, had joined Force "A.1" about the same time, and in the course of the forenoon all the scattered destroyers (except the *Kipling*) joined up. Later on in the day the *Jaguar* and *Defender* were detached to land ammunition at Suda, the remainder proceeding to Alexandria where they arrived that night.

The *Rorqual* also arrived that day from patrol in the Aegean. She reported that after laying her mines off Salonika she had sunk a caique and a schooner by gunfire, each full of German troops, near Chios.

27. The fighting in Crete, 21st—24th May (*Plan 2*)

On shore, meanwhile, the situation had deteriorated. During the 21st, although Maleme airfield remained no-man's-land under fire from Italian guns manned by New Zealand gunners, enemy troop carriers landed there regardless of losses. Parachute reinforcements also arrived, and the Germans concentrated between Aliakanou and Canea, and immediately west of Maleme. The savage air bombardment of the British positions continued.

Early on the 22nd, a British counter attack reached Maleme airfield, but heavy dive bombing, and machine gun fire from air and ground rendered further progress impossible. Fighting continued throughout the day, but enemy troop carriers with reinforcements were arriving at the rate of more than 20 each hour, and the withdrawal of British troops to a new line further east was commenced.

The steady flow of German reinforcements, and very heavy air attacks on the British troops continued throughout the 23rd. On this day, the 5 motor torpedo boats of the 10th M.T.B. flotilla in Suda Bay were singled out for attack by aircraft, and all were sunk. During their operations off the Cretan

[1] 8 officers, 120 ratings from the *Kelly*; 9 officers, 144 ratings from the *Kashmir*.

[2] It was necessary to send the *Protector* to meet the *Kipling* 50 miles from Alexandria next morning, as she had run right out of fuel.

[3] Fuel remaining when pumping commenced:—
Kandahar 10 tons.
Kingston 17 tons.

[4] The *Kipling's* signal, corroborated by an aircraft report, showed her as being stopped. Support from Forces "A.1" and "C" could not have reached her till 1600/23.

coast and in harbour, they had accounted for 2 aircraft for certain and a further 2 probably shot down.[1]

By the 24th the A.A. defences of Suda had been seriously reduced and losses to small craft in the port were heavy. Severe bombing at Canea compelled the withdrawal of Army Headquarters to the Naval Headquarters at Suda.

At Heraklion, in the meantime, the Germans had been unable to make much headway. Successful counter attacks were carried out by British troops, in conjunction with Greek and Cretan forces on the 21st, and the situation remained well in hand next day, 20 or 30 troop-carrying aircraft being destroyed by A.A. fire.

On the 23rd an ultimatum from the Germans calling for the surrender of Heraklion was rejected by the British and Greek Commanders, though by this time the Greeks were running short of ammunition.

28. Reinforcements and supplies to the Army in Crete (*Plan 1*)

Throughout the Battle of Crete, frequent attempts were made to throw reinforcements and supplies into the Island, with varying success. It will be convenient to give some account of these efforts at this stage although this entails some anticipation of events.

All disembarkation had to be timed to take place at night, owing to the German command of the air. Attempts were made to use the *Glenroy* and merchant ships for this purpose, but it was found in practice that only H.M. ships were able to get through. On the night of the 23rd—24th May, the destroyers *Jaguar* (Lt. Comdr. J. F. Hine—Senior Officer) and *Defender* landed stores and ammunition at Suda between midnight and 0200. They returned to Alexandria with officers and men not required in Crete, and some wounded.

The *Glenroy* embarked 900 men of the Queens Royal Regiment, H.Q. Staff of 16th Infantry Brigade and 18 vehicles at Alexandria, and sailed for Tymbaki on the afternoon of the 22nd, escorted by the *Coventry*, *Auckland* and *Flamingo*. In view of the intense scale of the enemy air attack off Crete, as evidenced by the losses being suffered by the forces operating there at the time, the Commander-in-Chief, after consultation with General Wavell, recalled her at 1127, 23rd; and a further plan for the reinforcement of the Island, using the *Abdiel* and destroyers, was worked out.[2]

The following day the destroyers *Isis* (Commander C. S. B. Swinley, Senior Officer), *Hero* and *Nizam* sailed from Alexandria with the Headquarters and 2 battalions of special service troops, known as " Layforce ", who were to be landed at Selinos Kastelli in the south-west of Crete, (Lat. 35° 13′ N. Long. 23° 40′ E.). The weather, however, proved too bad for landing operations, and the landing was cancelled.

During the night of 24th—25th, the minelayer *Abdiel* (Captain the Hon. E. Pleydell-Bouverie) landed about 200 personnel of " Layforce " and about 80 tons of military stores at Suda. She returned with about 50 wounded and 4 Greek Cabinet Ministers. A dive bombing attack by 4 Ju. 88s at about 1300, 25th, was successfully avoided.

[1] The Local Defence vessels, Suda, carried out their duties most gallantly under almost incessant air attack until the evacuation started, when the survivors were ordered to Alexandria. Only 3 vessels arrived there. Captain Morse speaks highly of their work, especially the *Salvia* and *Lanner*. (See Apps. A and E).

[2] These reinforcements were considered so important that during the afternoon of the 23rd the Admiralty ordered the *Glenroy* to turn to the northward, pending further instructions, and urged the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, to land them that night if possible. It was, however, too late for her to reach Tymbaki in time, and she would have been in the worst possible position for air attacks in daylight had she continued to the northward.

On arrival at Alexandria that evening the *Abdiel* embarked Brigadier Laycock, with 400 men and about 100 tons of stores, and left again early next morning accompanied by the *Hero* and *Nizam*. These ships landed about 750 troops and stores at Suda during the night of 26th—27th. These were the last reinforcements landed in Crete.

About 930 men no longer required there took passage to Alexandria in the *Abdiel*. Air attacks commenced at daylight, just north-west of the Kaso Strait, and continued intermittently till 1130. No damage was sustained, except by the *Hero* whose speed was reduced to 28 knots by a near miss at 0700.

Meanwhile, the *Glenroy* with a battalion of the Queen's Regiment on board, had sailed from Alexandria during the evening of the 25th for Tymbaki, escorted by the *Stuart*, *Coventry* and *Jaguar*. The force was subjected to bombing attacks by reconnaissance aircraft during the forenoon. At 1820 there were heavy dive bombing attacks, in the course of which one aircraft was shot down and one appeared to be damaged. The *Glenroy* received slight damage and casualties from near misses and machine gun attack; three of her landing craft were holed, and a large dump of cased petrol on the upper deck caught fire, which necessitated steering down wind until the fire was put out. With 800 troops on board, and a large cargo of petrol, it was a nasty situation; but the fire was got under by 1950, when course was resumed to the northward. A final attack by torpedo bombers occurred at 2050, the torpedoes being successfully avoided.

The *Glenroy* was now some 3 hours behind her scheduled time, her landing craft capacity had been reduced by one third, and the weather was unsuitable for landing troops on a beach. It was accordingly decided that the operation must be cancelled, and the force returned to Alexandria.

One other attempt was made to maintain supplies. Although the risk of sending slow merchant ships to Crete was fully realised, it was thought that the importance of getting stores to the army demanded that the attempt should be made. Convoy A.N.31, consisting of two ships escorted by the *Auckland*[1] left Alexandria at 0500, 26th: but early next forenoon, they were recalled, as it was realised that under existing conditions they would not have a chance of reaching the Island.

Shortly after turning back, the convoy was bombed by about 9 Ju. 88s, happily without sustaining damage. One of the attacking aircraft was seen to be hit.

29. Naval situation at dawn, 24th May

At daylight on the 24th, the only naval forces at sea were the *Jaguar* and *Defender*, which were about to pass through Kaso Strait on passage from Suda to Alexandria, and the *Abdiel*, which had left Alexandria during the night and was on passage to Suda Bay with stores for the army.

The *Kipling*, with survivors from the *Kelly* and *Kashmir* on board, was about 70 miles from Alexandria, practically out of fuel, and the *Protector* was on her way to meet her.

It was on this day that the Commander-in-Chief, well aware of the strain under which his ships were working, signalled to his Fleet:—" . . . The Army is just holding its own against constant reinforcement of airborne enemy troops. We must NOT let them down. At whatever cost to ourselves, we must land reinforcements for them and keep the enemy from using the sea. There are indications that the enemy resources are stretched to the limit. We can and must outlast them. STICK IT OUT."

[1] The *Calcutta* and *Defender* were to augment the escort later.

30. The Commander-in-Chief's appreciation, 24th May

Four days had now elapsed since the opening of the attack on Crete, and in reply to a request from the Chiefs-of-Staff for an appreciation, the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, informed them that the scale of air attack now made it no longer possible for the Navy to operate in the Aegean or vicinity of Crete by day. The Navy could not guarantee to prevent seaborne landings without suffering losses which, added to those already sustained, would very seriously prejudice our command of the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Chiefs-of-Staff replied that the Fleet and the Royal Air Force were to accept whatever risk was entailed in preventing any considerable enemy reinforcement from reaching Crete. If enemy convoys were reported north of Crete, the Fleet would have to operate in that area by day, although considerable losses might be expected. Experience would show for how long that situation could be maintained.

To this the Commander-in-Chief replied, (two days later, on the 26th), that the determining factor in operating in the Aegean was not the fear of sustaining losses, but the need to avoid crippling the Fleet, without commensurate advantage to ourselves. He added that so far the enemy had apparently not succeeded in landing any appreciable reinforcements by sea.

As to how long the situation could be maintained, he pointed out that in three days 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers had been sunk, one battleship had been put out of action for several months, and 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers had been considerably damaged.[1] He also referred to the strain both to personnel and machinery in the light craft, who had been operating to the limits of their endurance since February.

31. Captain McCarthy's force, 24th–26th May

There had been indications that a landing might take place in the east of Crete at Sitia on the night of the 24th—25th May. To deal with this threat, a force consisting of the cruisers *Ajax* (Captain E. D. B. McCarthy—Senior Officer), *Dido* and destroyers *Imperial*, *Kimberley* and *Hotspur*, left Alexandria at 0800, 24th and, passing through Kaso Strait, swept the north coast of Crete during the night.[2] Nothing was sighted and the force withdrew to the southward of Kaso before daylight. Here they remained during the 25th, repeating the sweep north of Crete, again without incident, on the night of the 25th—26th.

32. F.A.A. attack on Scarpanto airfield, 26th May (*Plan 1*)

It was known that Scarpanto airfield was being extensively used by the enemy in his operations against Crete, and it was therefore decided to attack it with Fleet Air Arm aircraft from the *Formidable*, who had now built up her fighter strength to 12 Fulmars.[3]

Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell (V.A.I.), wearing his flag in the *Queen Elizabeth*, with the *Barham*, *Formidable*, and destroyers *Jervis*, *Janus*, *Kandahar*, *Nubian*, *Hasty*, *Hereward*, *Voyager* and *Vendetta* (Force " A ") had left Alexandria

[1] News of damage to the *Formidable* and *Nubian* reached the Commander-in-Chief while writing this message.

[2] Time did not allow this force to bombard Maleme as had been contemplated.

[3] Some of these were of doubtful reliability.

Embarked in HMS Formidable were Squadrons No. 803 (12 Fulmars) No 828 (12 Albacores) No 829 (9 Albacores)

on the 25th, and at 0330 next morning was approximately 100 miles south-south-west of Scarpanto. Four Albacores and later five Fulmars were flown off from the *Formidable* (Captain Bisset), wearing the flag of the R.A.(A)., Rear-Admiral Boyd,[1] to attack the airfield.[2]

The Albacores achieved complete surprise, and destroyed two aircraft and damaged others, while the Fulmars damaged a number of C.R. 42s and Ju. 87s. All our aircraft had returned to the *Formidable* by 0700 when, the *Ajax's* Force (2 cr., 3 dr.)[3] having joined from Kaso Strait, Force " A " set course to the southward.

33. Operations of Force " A ". H.M. Ships *Formidable* and *Nubian* damaged, 26th May

During the forenoon of the 26th May, enemy aircraft were continually being detected. The eight remaining serviceable aircraft, four of which were fighters, in the *Formidable* made 24 flights, during which there were 20 combats. Two enemy aircraft were certainly shot down: two more were probably destroyed. One Fulmar was lost. At 1320, when about 150 miles south of Kaso Strait, Force " A " was attacked by about 20 dive bombers, which approached from the African coast. The *Formidable* was hit twice: her starboard side was blown out between numbers 17 and 24 bulkheads, and X turret and cable and accelerator gear were put out of action.

During the same attack the *Nubian* (Commander R. W. Ravenhill) was hit right aft and had her stern blown off, but she was still able to steam at 20 knots. As soon as this was ascertained, she was detached to Alexandria with the *Jackal*, where she arrived under her own steam that night.

Force " A " then shaped course to the eastward, and after dark the *Formidable* parted company and proceeded to Alexandria with four destroyers. The remainder of the Force operated to the north-westward of Alexandria during the night.

34. Naval situation at dawn, 27th May (*Plan 1*)

At daylight, 27th May, Force " A " now consisting of the *Queen Elizabeth*, *Barham*, *Jervis*, *Janus*, *Kelvin*, *Napier*, *Kandahar* and *Hasty* were about 250 miles south-east of Kaso, steering to the north-westward. The *Ajax* and *Dido* were detached to Alexandria at 0600. In Kaso Strait, the *Abdiel*, *Hero* and *Nizam* were returning from Suda.

Some 90 miles to the north-west of Force " A ", the *Glenroy* and her escort was steering for Alexandria, after her abortive attempt to land troops at Tymbaki; and about half way between these two forces, convoy A.N.31, which was shortly to be recalled, was heading for Crete.

35. Operations of Force " A ": H.M.S. *Barham* damaged, 27th May

Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell with Force " A " had been steering since daylight for Kaso Strait, to cover the withdrawal of the *Abdiel*. At 0859, 15 Ju. 88s and He. 111s attacked from the direction of the sun. The *Barham* was

[1] Rear-Admiral D. W. Boyd, C.B.E., D.S.C.

[2] Of four other aircraft intended to take part, two could not be flown off, and two returned to the carrier owing to unserviceability.

[3] The destroyers originally with *Ajax* were now on passage back to Alexandria, having been relieved by the *Napier*, *Kelvin* and *Jackal*.

hit on Y turret, and two of her bulges were flooded by near misses. A fire was started, which necessitated steering down wind to the south until it was extinguished two hours later. Two enemy aircraft were shot down and one was seen to be damaged.

At 1230, on receipt of instructions from the Commander-in-Chief, Force " A " shaped course for Alexandria, arriving there at 1900 that evening.

36. The collapse in the Suda-Maleme area, 26th May (*Plan 2*)

While these operations had been in progress at sea, the battle on shore had continued with unabated bitterness. Sunday, 25th May, the sixth day of the attack was critical for the Australian and New Zealand troops in the Maleme area. After continuous bombing of their positions all day, a strong enemy attack took Galatos. British light tanks and New Zealand troops retook it at the point of the bayonet. This was described by General Freyberg as " one of the great efforts in the defence of Crete ". The position there could not be held, however, and with Maleme no longer under fire, enemy troop carriers poured in reinforcements. Late that night the new line formed in the Maleme-Canea sector was broken by the Germans, after several attacks had been repulsed. The next day (26th May) further attacks compelled the tired New Zealand and Australian troops to withdraw still further towards Suda. They had fought for six days without respite; more than 20 fierce bayonet counter attacks had been carried out, and throughout the whole period they had been subjected to air attacks on unprecedented scale. That night the line collapsed and the retreat commenced.

So suddenly did the collapse come at the last, that there had been no time to organise the retirement and though the infantry which withdrew from the front line did so in good order, the movements of the rest of the force were uncontrolled, and much congestion on the route resulted.

The withdrawal, which was directed towards Sphakia continued during the 27th. By this time a rearguard under Major-General Weston R.M., had been organised which was able to cover the retirement of the bulk of the remainder to Sphakia.

Meanwhile, in the Heraklion sector the British troops[1] were holding out. On the 26th, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and two of the " I " tanks which had been landed at Tymbaki on the 19th, succeeded in breaking through from the south, and joining them. With the Suda-Maleme area in the hands of the enemy, however, the position of the troops at Heraklion was clearly untenable and it appeared to be only a matter of time before the enemy would launch a major attack on them.

37. The work of the Royal Air Force

Throughout the battle, the Royal Air Force, working from Egypt did all that was possible to afford relief to our troops in Crete: but the distance was too great to maintain a scale of attack on the Germans which could affect the issue.

Enemy positions and aircraft were attacked at Maleme by Blenheims and Marylands (of the S.A.A.F.) at intervals on the 23rd, 25th, 26th and 27th. In these raids at least 40 enemy aircraft of various types were destroyed and many others were damaged. Nine Ju. 52s carrying troops were destroyed by

[1] These troops which had formed the original British garrison in Crete were much better equipped than the British and Imperial troops in the western part of the Island, who had been evacuated from Greece.

Hurricanes on the 23rd and 26th. Wellingtons bombed Maleme on the nights of the 23rd, 25th, 26th, 27th and 29th: they also attacked Scarpanto on the nights of the 25th, 27th, 28th and 29th, and Heraklion on the 30th and 31st May, and 1st June. All these attacks caused fires and explosions, but the extent of the damage inflicted is not known. During the battle the R.A.F. lost 38 aircraft—33 of them in the air; out of 618 R.A.F. personnel in the island, 257 (42 per cent.) were battle casualties.

38. The decision to evacuate Crete, 27th May

Messages received from the G.O.C. Troops in Crete, and the N.O.I.C. Suda Bay,[1] made it clear that our line defending Suda had collapsed with great suddenness.

In a message timed 0824, 27th May, General Wavell informed that Prime Minister that he feared we must recognise that Crete was no longer tenable, and that, so far as possible, the troops must be withdrawn.

In reply to this message, the Chiefs-of-Staff ordered Crete to be evacuated forthwith.

One ray of light illuminated this otherwise grim day. " News of the sinking of the German battleship *Bismarck* in the Atlantic "—to quote the Mediterranean War Diary—" and of the successful operations leading up to it was encouraging and particularly welcome after the loss of H.M.S. *Hood* and the recent heavy losses in the Mediterranean ".

39. The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean; Summing-up

Commenting on the phase of operations now concluded the Commander-in-Chief remarked that the Navy could claim to have prevented seaborne invasion of Crete and to have kept the Army supplied with essential reinforcements of men and stores. The Fleet had inflicted considerable losses on the German troop-carrying convoys,[2] and had destroyed a number of enemy aircraft.[3]

The losses and damage sustained by the Fleet in this encounter with the unhampered German air force were severe, and officers and men had been subjected to prolonged strain from the constant bombing. Little rest could be given, as a formidable task lay ahead—the evacuation of some 22,000 men from Crete to Egypt.

" I have never," wrote Sir Andrew Cunningham, " felt prouder of the Mediterranean Fleet, than at the close of these particular operations, except perhaps at the fashion in which it faced up to the even greater strain, which was so soon to be imposed upon it."

[1] The N.O.I.C. Suda (Captain Morse) had foreseen four days earlier that this might happen, and had taken a number of precautionary measures, which would facilitate evacuation.

[2] About 16 caiques and several steamers—probably between 2,000 and 3,000 troops.

[3] Twenty shot down for certain; 11 probably. At least 15 damaged.

CHAPTER IV

The Evacuation

40. General considerations as to evacuation

AFTER A BATTLE which had lasted eight days, the Mediterranean Fleet now had to face the task of evacuating some 22,000 men, mostly from an open beach on the south coast of Crete some 360 miles distant from the fleet base at Alexandria.

So far, the Fleet had lost two cruisers and four destroyers; in addition, two battleships, the aircraft carrier, one cruiser and one destroyer were virtually out of action. Five other cruisers and four destroyers had suffered minor damage, which did not, however, greatly affect their steaming powers or fighting efficiency.

Hitherto, the Fleet had been obliged to operate without fighter protection, except for the brief period on the 26th May when the *Formidable*'s fighters were available. On the 27th a message was received from the A.O. C.-in-C., Middle East,[1] stating that the Royal Air Force would do everything possible to provide some fighter cover for our ships, but that this cover would be only meagre and spasmodic, owing to the distance from our bases. Group Captain C. B. R. Pelly was attached temporarily to the staff of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, to co-ordinate fighter protection with the movement of fleet units.[2]

41. Plan of evacuation (*Plan 1*)

Throughout the evacuation, the great difficulty of the Commander-in-Chief was to find out in advance the exact numbers to be removed on each night. The number to be taken off and the embarkation points were signalled by the G.O.C. Troops in Crete (Creforce),[3] but these estimates usually required considerable revision. The Commander-in-Chief after consulting with Major-General Evetts,[4] who was acting as his military liaison officer, would then decide on the number of ships to be sent.

The original plan for evacuating the troops was as follows:— Evacuation was invariably to be carried out at night, usually between the hours of midnight and 0300. This allowed the ships to be as far as possible from enemy air bases by daylight. Troops from the Maleme-Suda area were to come off from Sphakia on the south coast (Lat. 35° 13′ N., Long. 24° 10′ E.), and troops from Retimo from Plaka Bay (Lat. 35° 11′ N., Long. 24° 24′ E.), 13 miles east

[1] Air Marshal A. W. Tedder, C.B.

[2] The Commander-in-Chief paid a warm tribute to the work carried out by this Officer.

[3] The initial estimate of numbers, which proved substantially correct, was given by the N.O.I.C. Suda (Captain Morse).

[4] Major-General J. F. Evetts, C.B., C.B.E., M.C. The C.-in-C. paid warm tribute to the assistance he received from this officer.

of Sphakia. Those in the Heraklion area would use Heraklion Harbour, and a small number who were cut off to the south of Heraklion were expected to make their way to Tymbaki (Lat. 35° 03′ N., Long. 24° 47′ E.).

Ashore in Crete, the evacuation was to be covered by troops fighting a rearguard action from the Suda Bay area to the south coast. Major-General Weston was placed in command of the rearguard.

Only one of the evacuations, that from Heraklion, could be made from a port with any facilities at all. As things turned out, all the remainder had to be carried out from the small open beach, less than a cable's length in width, at the little fishing village of Sphakia.[1] Here access from the land was both difficult and slow.

The Headquarters of the G.O.C. Troops in Crete, and the N.O.I.C. Suda had been shifted to a cave near Sphakia. Outside naval communications were maintained by the Royal Air Force W/T set at these headquarters.[2]

42. Evacuation from Sphakia: 1st night, 28th–29th May 1941 (*Plan 4*)

At 0600, 28th May—less than 24 hours after the decision to evacuate the island had been taken—Force " B ", consisting of the cruisers *Orion*, *Ajax*, *Dido*, and destroyers *Decoy*, *Jackal*, *Imperial*, *Hotspur*, *Kimberley* and *Hereward* sailed from Alexandria to evacuate the Heraklion garrison. Rear-Admiral H. B. Rawlings wearing his flag in the *Orion* was given charge of this operation.

Two hours later, Force " C ", under Captain S. H. T. Arliss, R.N. in the *Napier*, with the *Nizam*, *Kelvin* and *Kandahar*, after embarking additional whalers and some small arms and provisions for the troops ashore, left Alexandria for Sphakia. Force " C " had an uneventful passage, and commenced embarkation at 0030, 29th May. The operation was completed by 0300, by which time the four destroyers had taken on board nearly 700 troops, and had landed badly needed rations for 15,000.

On the return passage, the force was attacked by four Ju. 88s at about 0900, and the *Nizam* suffered minor damage from a near miss. Fighter protection had been arranged from 0545, and at 0940 a crashed enemy aircraft was sighted, which had probably been shot down by our fighters. Force " C " arrived at Alexandria at 1700 on the 29th, after a successful operation, singularly free from enemy interference.

43. Evacuation of the Heraklion garrison, 28th–29th May (*Plan 4*)

Rear-Admiral Rawlings, meanwhile, had been having a very different experience. At 1700/28, Force " B " (3 cr., 6 dr.) was about 90 miles from Scarpanto, and from then until dark was subjected to a series of air attacks—high level, dive bombing and torpedo. At 1920, the *Imperial* (Lieut. Comdr. C. A. DeW. Kitcat) was " near missed ", but appeared to be undamaged, and 50 minutes later, a near miss caused slight damage and some casualties in the *Ajax*, which was detached to Alexandria.[3]

[1] The road over the mountains from Suda to Sphakia finished up with a series of acute hairpin bends, and came to an abrupt termination at the top of a 500 foot high escarpment. From this point a precipitous goat track led down to the village. It was necessary for the troops to remain hidden from air observation until actually called forward to embark. Touch between the beach area and the top of the escarpment had to be maintained on foot, as there was no signal communication. The climb required at least two hours to complete.

[2] Portable W/T sets and naval cyphers which had been sent from Suda in M.L. 1011 were lost when she was sunk by air attack on the way round. Another W/T set had been sent overland by lorry, but this arrived in a damaged condition and was of no use.

[3] Subsequent examination in harbour revealed that the report given to the Commanding Officer had exaggerated the damage, and she could in fact have carried on with Force " B ".

On arrival of the force at Heraklion at 2330, the destroyers immediately entered harbour, embarked troops from the jetties and ferried them to the cruisers outside. By 0245, 29th, the ferrying was complete, and a quarter of an hour later the *Kimberley* and *Imperial* had embarked the rearguard.[1] At 0320 the Squadron proceeded to sea at 29 knots, with the whole of the Heraklion garrison, amounting to some 4,000 troops, on board.

All appeared to be going well, when at 0345 the *Imperial*'s steering gear failed, and she narrowly missed colliding with both cruisers. This could scarcely have occurred at a more inopportune time; it was essential to be as far as possible from the enemy air bases by daylight, and Rear-Admiral Rawlings was faced by the difficult decision whether to wait in the hope that repairs could be effected, or to sink the *Imperial* and carry on. Learning that her rudder was jammed and that she was quite unable to steer he reduced the speed of the squadron to 15 knots, and sent back the *Hotspur* with orders to take off all the *Imperial*'s troops and crew, and to sink her.[2]

This was successfully accomplished by 0445, and the *Hotspur*, which now had a total of 900 men on board, rejoined the Squadron just after daylight. The delay, however, had caused Force " B " to be an hour and a half late on their time-table, and it was not until sunrise that they turned to the southward through Kaso Strait. There on the watch like birds of ill omen silhouetted against the early dawn hung four Junker 88s.

Arrangements had been made for fighter protection to be provided at 0530 in the Kaso Strait:[3] this time was amended to 0630 by signal, but the fighters did not succeed in making contact with the ships.

Air attacks on Force " B " commenced at 0600, and continued at intervals till 1500, by which time the Squadron was within 100 miles of Alexandria.

At 0625 the *Hereward* (Lieutenant W. J. Munn) was hit by a bomb, which caused her to reduce speed and fall away from her position on the screen. The Force was then in the middle of Kaso Strait, and once more Rear-Admiral Rawlings had to decide whether to imperil his whole force and the troops on board, for the sake of a single ship, or to leave her to certain destruction. He decided that to wait would be but to invite further casualties.[4] The *Hereward* was last seen making slowly towards Crete, which was only five miles distant, with her guns engaging enemy aircraft.[5]

Twenty minutes later the *Decoy* suffered damage to her machinery as the result of a near miss, and the speed of the Squadron had to be reduced to 25 knots: a further reduction to 21 knots was compelled by a bomb which fell very close to the *Orion* at 0730.

With 4,000 troops on board, the speed reduced to 21 knots, and still no fighter support, things were beginning to look ugly. The Commander-in-Chief realised from Rear-Admiral Rawlings' signals that our fighters had not appeared,

[1] Rear-Admiral Rawlings commended the work of the N.O.I.C. Heraklion, Captain M. H. S. MacDonald, R.N., and remarked, " the arrangements ashore must have been admirable . . . they went off like clockwork."

[2] This decision was approved subsequently by the Commander-in-Chief, who remarks, " The decision to sink her cannot be cavilled at, though it might have been wiser to remove her troops only, and let her struggle home."

[3] These arrangements had been confirmed in a signal timed 2221/28 from the C.-in-C. to Rear-Admiral Rawlings; but at 0745 he received a signal from H.Q. 204 Group which made it clear that the first fighter had been ordered to contact him at 0540 *G.M.T.*, *i.e.*, none could be expected till well after 0800 (Zone minus 3). It is not known how this serious error occurred.

[4] This decision was also endorsed by the Commander-in-Chief as follows:—" The difficult decision to leave H.M.S. *Hereward* to her fate was undoubtedly correct, and it is at least some consolation that a large proportion of those on board survived."

[5] She was sunk by further air attacks some miles from the shore. A large number of those on board were picked up by Italian motor boats.

and every endeavour was made to rectify this. It is probable, however, that our aircraft had navigational difficulties, as they were unable to make contact with the ships before noon.

By this time, Force " B " had suffered severely. Shortly after 0730 the Flag-Captain in the *Orion* (Captain G. R. B. Back), was wounded by an explosive bullet and he died two hours later, his place being taken by Commander T. C. T. Wynne. The *Dido* was hit on B turret at 0815, and the *Orion* on A turret at 0900, both by bombs from Ju. 87s. In each case the turrets were put out of action. At 1045 the *Orion* was again attacked by 11 Ju. 87s, and a bomb passed through her bridge, putting the lower conning tower out of action. The force was then about 100 miles from Kaso, and this was the last attack made by dive bombers.

The *Orion* had nearly 1,100 troops[1] on board, and the casualties on the crowded mess decks were very heavy. It is believed that a total of 260 were killed and 280 wounded. In addition, three of the Engineer Officers were killed; all normal communication between the bridge and engine room was destroyed; the steering gear was put out of action, and three boiler rooms were damaged;[2] and there were fires over the foremost 6-inch and H.A. magazines.

There was a lull in the air attacks until 1300, when a high level attack developed, followed by another at 1330, and a final one at 1500. The first, and only friendly fighters seen were two naval Fulmars of the F.A.A. They were due at noon, and were there on the stroke of the hour[3]. Royal Air Force squadrons had made several attempts to find our ships, and in the course of a number of engagements had shot down two Ju. 88s, for the loss of one Hurricane. One Ju. 87 was shot down by ships' gunfire.

Force " B " arrived at Alexandria at 2000 on the 29th May, the *Orion* having only 10 tons of fuel and two rounds of 6-inch H.E. ammunition remaining.

44. Feasibility of further evacuation considered, 29th–30th May 1941

This disastrous commencement of the evacuation placed the Commander-in-Chief in a most unpleasant predicament. Of the 4,000 troops embarked in Force " B " no less than 800 had been killed, wounded or captured[4] after leaving Crete. If this was to be the scale of the casualties, it appeared that quite apart from prospective naval losses of ships and men, who could ill be spared, our efforts to rescue the army from capture might only lead to the destruction of a large proportion of the troops.

Particular anxiety was felt for the *Glengyle*, which was already at sea, and was due to embark 3,000 troops the next night, (29th–30th).

It was only after long and anxious consideration, and consultation with the

[1] " From about 0620 onwards military personnel had come on deck and mounted Bren and Lewis guns in suitable positions throughout the ship. No praise can be too high for the way in which they behaved throughout. 18 guns were in action by 0700."—Report of C.O. *Orion*.

[2] Owing to the contamination of the oil fuel with salt water, speed varied between 12 and 25 knots: but an average of 21 knots was maintained.

[3] The Commander-in-Chief, knowing how hard pressed Rear-Admiral Rawlings was, had given them orders to go out and stay over Force " B " till their petrol was exhausted, when they were to land in the sea and trust to being picked up by destroyers. Actually, this was not necessary, as, contrary to expectations, it was found possible to relieve them before their fuel ran out.

[4] Those embarked in H.M.S. *Hereward*.

Admiralty,[1] as well as with the military authorities, that the decision to continue the evacuation could be taken.[2]

Once taken, this decision was amply justified. The remainder of the evacuation proceeded almost without casualties to personnel. Fighter protection became steadily more effective, and the enemy less enterprising: his failure to interfere with the nightly embarkations at Sphakia was most surprising.

The original intention to send ships to Plaka Bay to take off the Retimo garrison was abandoned, as it was not known whether the troops had received the message ordering them to retire there.[3] Moreover, it was doubtful whether they would be able to reach the coast, since they had no supplies; 1,200 rations were dropped by air at Plaka, in case any should get there, but it was decided to send ships to Sphakia only.

From messages received from Crete during the night of 28th–29th, it was thought that the next night would have to be the last night of the evacuation; but in the course of the day it became clear that the situation was not so desperate as it had appeared, and the Commander-in-Chief decided to send four destroyers to embark men on the night of the 30th–31st.

45. Evacuation from Sphakia: 2nd night, 29th–30th May

Meanwhile, Rear-Admiral King, wearing his flag in the *Phoebe*, had left Alexandria in the evening of the 28th with the *Perth*, *Glengyle*, *Calcutta*, *Coventry*, *Jervis*, *Janus* and *Hasty* (Force " D ") for Sphakia to carry out evacuation during the night of the 29th–30th. The passage to Sphakia was uneventful: apart from an attack by one Ju. 88, whose bombs fell near the *Perth*, the force was unmolested.

The *Glengyle* and the cruisers were anchored off Sphakia by 2330, 29th, and the destroyers closed in one at a time to embark their quota. The troops were ferried from the beach in the *Glengyle*'s landing craft, assisted by two assault landing craft, which had been carried in the *Perth*. The beach was too small for ships' boats to be used in addition.

By 0320, 30th, a total of about 6,000 men had been embarked, and Force " D " sailed for Alexandria, leaving three motor landing craft behind, for use on subsequent nights. During the passage, there were three air attacks on the Squadron, which had been joined by the destroyers *Stuart*, *Jaguar* and *Defender*, as extra cover at 0645.

In the first of these attacks, at 0930, the *Perth* was hit, and her foremost boiler room put out of action; the second and third attacks achieved no result, though bombs fell very close to the *Perth* and *Jaguar*. One Ju. 88 was seen to be damaged by ships' gunfire. Force " D " was covered by two or three Royal Air Force fighters most of the day. These fighters on one occasion drove off 20 Ju. 87s and Ju. 88s, and in various engagements shot down two He. 111s and damaged a number of enemy aircraft.

[1] The Commander-in-Chief wished to know if he was justified in accepting the anticipated scale of loss and damage to his already weakened Fleet. He was, however, ready and willing to continue the evacuation as long as a ship remained to do so, realising that it was against all tradition to leave troops deliberately in the enemy's hands.

[2] It was on this occasion that Sir Andrew Cunningham is said to have remarked:—" It takes the Navy three years to build a new ship. It will take three hundred to build a new tradition. The evacuation will continue."

[3] An R.A.F. aircraft, sent to give instructions to Retimo failed to return, and Creforce signalled that it could not be guaranteed that the orders had been received.

46. Evacuation from Sphakia: 3rd night: 30th–31st May

At 0915, 30th May, Force " C " consisting of the destroyers *Napier* (Captain Arliss), *Nizam*, *Kelvin* and *Kandahar* again left Alexandria for Sphakia. After a few hours the *Kandahar* developed a mechanical defect and had to return to harbour. At 1530, three Ju. 88s carried out an unseen dive from astern; the *Kelvin*'s speed was reduced to 20 knots by a near miss, and she was detached to Alexandria.

Captain Arliss continued with his reduced force, and arrived at Sphakia at 0030, 31st. By 0300, each destroyer had embarked over 700 troops, using the three motor landing craft left behind the previous night, supplemented by the ships' boats.

During this same night, the G.O.C. Troops in Crete (Major-General Freyberg, V.C.), acting on instructions from G.H.Q., Middle East, accompanied by the N.O.I.C. Suda Bay (Captain Morse), who had received similar instructions from the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, embarked at Sphakia in a Sunderland flying boat and returned to Egypt. Major-General Weston was left in command of the troops in Crete.

On the return passage Force " C " was attacked by about 12 Ju. 88s between 0850 and 0915; both destroyers were damaged by near misses and the *Napier* had her speed reduced to 23 knots. One Ju. 88 was shot down, and three others were hit.

R.A.F. fighters had been sighted by Force " C " at 0625; these claim to have shot down in the course of the day three Ju. 88s and one Cant. 1007. The remainder of the passage was without incident, and the *Napier* and *Nizam* arrived at Alexandria with 1,510 troops on board that evening.

47. The final evacuation: Sphakia, 31st May–1st June

On the 30th May Creforce had asked that a final lift for 3,000 men should be arranged for the night of 31st May–1st June; this represented a large increase over previous estimates. After consultation with General Wavell, a reply was made that all available ships would be sent to Sphakia that night, but that the maximum number who could be lifted would not exceed 2,000.

Vice-Admiral King[1] wearing his flag in the *Phoebe* with the *Abdiel*, *Kimberley*, *Hotspur* and *Jackal* sailed at 0600, 31st, to carry out this final evacuation.

That forenoon the Commander-in-Chief received a signal from Captain Arliss who was then on his way back from Sphakia, which indicated that there were some 6,500 men to come off from Crete. Vice-Admiral King was accordingly authorised to increase the maximum number to 3,500.

Later a consultation was held between the Commander-in-Chief, the Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, P.C. (Prime Minister of New Zealand), General Wavell and Major-Generals Freyberg and Evetts. At this it was decided that the force under Vice-Admiral King now on its way to Sphakia would be able to bring off the majority of the troops assembled there. A message was therefore sent to him ordering him to fill up his ships to capacity, and the Admiralty was informed that the evacuation would cease after the night of 31st May–1st June.

That evening, a personal message was sent from General Wavell to Major-General Weston informing him that this would be the last night of evacuation, and authorising the capitulation of any troops who had to be left in the island. General Weston himself was ordered to return to Egypt by flying boat.

Vice-Admiral King's force, meanwhile, on its way to Sphakia, suffered three attacks by aircraft in the evening of the 31st. None of the bombs fell very close, and one Ju. 88 was believed to be damaged. Many bombs were seen to be

[1] Rear-Admiral King had been promoted to Vice-Admiral 30th May 1941.

jettisoned on the horizon, indicating successful combats by our fighter aircraft.

Force " D " arrived at 2320, 31st. Three fully loaded motor landing craft, which had been left behind from the previous evacuation, immediately went alongside. The embarkation proceeded so quickly that for a time the beach was empty of troops; this was unfortunate, as it resulted in a last minute rush, which could not be dealt with in the time available and some troops had to be left behind.[1] Some medical stores were landed, and finally the three motor landing craft were disabled or sunk.

The force sailed at 0300, 1st June, having embarked nearly 4,000 troops and arrived at Alexandria, after an uneventful passage, at 1700 that afternoon.

48. Loss of H.M.S. *Calcutta*

Yet one more loss was suffered by the Fleet before finis could be written to the Cretan operations. In order to provide additional protection for Force " D " the A.A. cruisers *Calcutta* and *Coventry* were sailed from Alexandria early on 1st June to rendezvous with the returning squadron. When only about 100 miles out, they were attacked by two Ju. 88s, who dived from the direction of the sun. The *Coventry* was narrowly missed by the first; two bombs from the second hit the *Calcutta*, and she sank within a few minutes at 0920. The *Coventry* (Captain W. P. Carne, R.N.) succeeded in picking up 23 officers and 232 ratings, with whom she at once returned to Alexandria.

49. Impromptu escapes

With the arrival of Vice-Admiral King's squadron at Alexandria the Battle of Crete came to an end. No attempt at further evacuation on the night of 1st–2nd June could be undertaken. The only ships available were two battleships and five destroyers, the remaining ships being either damaged or too slow. In view of the situation then developing in the western desert and in Syria[2] the risk of further reduction in the strength of the Fleet could not be accepted. Apart from this, the 5,000 troops remaining in Crete were incapable of further resistance owing to strain and lack of food.

Some few of these sorely tried men, however, refused to bow to the seemingly inevitable and were able to make their own arrangements to leave the island. A brief account of their adventures will not be out of place in a record of the naval operations of the battle.

Major R. Garrett, R.M., after conducting a masterly rearguard action with some 700 Marines of the M.N.B.D.O., hastily organised as a rifle battalion, found himself among those left ashore. Preferring the deep sea to the Nazi devil, he collected a party of five officers and 134 other ranks—which included naval ratings, Australian, New Zealand, S.S. troops and 56 Marines—and put to sea in an abandoned motor landing craft, designed to carry 100 men for short trips at slow speed. One of her propellers was fouled by a wire; this they cleared at a small island some 20 miles from Crete, where they filled every receptacle they had with fresh water. They then set off for the North African coast.

After covering 80 miles their petrol ran out. Not to be defeated they rigged a jury mast and made sail with blankets. The unwieldy craft was so difficult

[1] Vice-Admiral King remarked that though there was room for a few more troops he could not wait beyond the calculated hour, as to have been caught too near the shore at daylight would have risked the whole party.

[2] See Naval Staff History, *Mediterranean*, Vol. II.

to steer that relays of six men had to swim alongside to keep her head in the required direction.

Rations and water ran very short, but a distilling plant consisting of petrol tins connected by a rubber tube was improvised and produced 4½ gallons of drinkable water in two days. Two of the company died on the eighth day, but the remainder landed near Sidi Barrani at 0130, 9th June, having covered about 200 miles.

Another officer discovered a boat and with a mixed party of 60 similarly escaped. Food ran out on the sixth day at sea, the last ration issued being a lump of margarine dipped in cocoa. Two days later this party also reached the Sidi Barrani area. Two other landing craft carrying somewhat over 100 men between them reached Egypt on 10th and 11th June, and smaller parties succeeded in getting across as the days went by[1]. These episodes are fine examples of the triumph of morale and self reliance over adversity in a moment of bitter disappointment.

50. Conclusion

Throughout the operations the Mediterranean Fleet had played a worthy part. Whilst the land fighting was in progress, sea-borne invasion had been prevented and reinforcements and stores for the Army had been maintained. When the evacuation was ordered, some 16,500 British and Imperial troops were brought safely to Egypt[2] and provisions and stores were landed for those who had to be left behind. The Royal Marines of the M.N.B.D.O. after manning the Canea defences fought to the last as part of the rearguard during the retreat to Sphakia;[3] of the original 2,200 which had landed in Crete, only about 1,000 returned.

The Fleet had to pay a heavy price for its achievement. Losses and damage were sustained,[4] which would normally only occur during a major fleet action, in which the enemy might be expected to suffer greater damage than our own. On this occasion, the enemy fleet was conspicuous by its absence, though it had many favourable opportunities for intervening,[5] and the battle was fought out between ships and aircraft.

All forms of air attack were experienced by our ships. High level bombing attacks were carried out by single aircraft, and occasionally by formations, the latter being Italian. Massed dive bombing was carried out by Ju. 87s, and independent dive and glide bombing attacks by Ju. 87s, Ju. 88s and He. 111s. Me. 109s carried out horizontal and shallow dive bombing attacks at very high speed and a height of a few hundred feet. Torpedo attacks were carried out by day and at dusk; no torpedo hits were obtained.[6]

[1] The *Thrasher*, while engaged on special duties, brought off 78 who had been in hiding (including 12 Greeks) on 28th July, and the *Torbay* 12 officers and 108 O.R's. on 19th August.

[2] See Appendix F.

[3] Major-General Freyberg V.C. warmly commended the work of the Royal Marines ashore in Crete.

[4] See Appendices D and E.
Three battleships and one aircraft carrier damaged, 3 cruisers and 6 destroyers sunk, and 6 cruisers and 7 destroyers damaged. Casualties amounted to 1,828 killed and 183 wounded.

[5] It is perhaps a measure of the Germans' opinion of the fighting value of their Allies that apparently no role was assigned to the Italian Fleet in these operations.

[6] See Appendix C.
Except for the *Juno*, which fell a victim to a high or low level attack, and the *Valiant* and *Perth* which were damaged by high level attacks, all our losses and casualties appear to have been due to dive bombing attacks.

When ships were inside the Aegean during daylight on 21st and 22nd May, attacks were almost continuous. Aircraft appeared to land on their nearby airfields, bomb up, refuel and return independently to the attack. This proximity of their bases not only enabled the enemy to maintain continuous and heavy attack, and to employ pilots inexperienced in navigating over the sea, but resulted in attacks being delivered with greater determination than usual, as even a damaged aircraft had a good chance of reaching land. At a distance of about 30 miles to seaward, the scale and vigour of the attacks were markedly diminished.

During the evacuation phase, the Royal Air Force gave what little protection was possible to the Fleet, operating their aircraft far out at sea to the limit of their endurance. The deterrent effect which the presence of even a few fighter aircraft had on the enemy was noticeable, and rendered it the more regrettable that none were available during the earlier stages of the battle.

Commenting on the evacuation, the Commander-in-Chief described the bearing and discipline of officers and men of all services as a source of inspiration. " It is not easy," he wrote, " to convey how heavy was the strain that men and ships sustained. Apart from the cumulative effect of prolonged seagoing over extended periods, it has to be remembered that in this last instance ships' companies had none of the inspiration of battle with the enemy to bear them up. Instead they had the unceasing anxiety of the task of trying to bring away in safety thousands of their own countrymen, many of whom were in an exhausted and dispirited condition, in ships necessarily so overcrowded that even when there was opportunity to relax, conditions made this impossible. They had started the evacuation already overtired, and they had to carry it through under conditions of savage air attack, such as had only recently caused grievous losses in the fleet . . . It is perhaps even now not realised how nearly the breaking point was reached, but that these men struggled through is the measure of their achievement, and I trust that it will not lightly be forgotten."

Warm tributes to the efforts of the Mediterranean Fleet were paid by the Commanders-in-Chief of the Sister Services. A personal message on 2nd June from General Sir Archibald Wavell to Sir Andrew Cunningham ran:—

> " I send to you and all under your command the deepest admiration and gratitude of the Army in the Middle East for the magnificent work of the Royal Navy in bringing back the troops from Crete. The skill and self sacrifice with which this difficult and dangerous operation was carried out will never be forgotten and will form another strong link between our two Services.
>
> " Our thanks to you and our sympathy for your losses."

On the same day the following message arrived from Air Marshal Tedder:—

> " May I express on behalf of myself and the Royal Air Force, Middle East, our deep admiration of the way in which the Royal Navy has once again succeeded in doing what seemed almost impossible."

On this note the story of the Battle for Crete may well end.

CHAPTER V

Reflections on the Battle of Crete

51. Some points of special interest

THE CONSIDERATION of any aspect of the Battle of Crete is bound to raise the question of the reasons of the German success.

Here, for the first time in history, we have the case of the invasion of an island by air, and as though to emphasise the efficacy of this new method, the defenders of that island enjoyed complete command of the sea. They had, moreover, had six months in which to perfect their defences on shore. Experience of German air tactics and parachutists' activities had been gathered in Poland, Holland, Belgium and France, and more recently in Greece. Surprise played but a small part, for the date of the commencement of the attack had been forecast within three days.

How, then, did the Germans achieve this success?

The dominating factor throughout the battle was of course the German Air Force. Internal lines of communication had enabled the enemy rapidly to assemble near the scene of operations ample numbers of aircraft of all types and before attempting the invasion they had established locally complete command of the air. The troops, too, by whom they were opposed at the all-important airfield at Maleme were ill-equipped and barely rested after their evacuation from Greece. Conditions could not well have been more favourable for the Germans.

Even so, the result of the battle was certainly on one occasion in the balance, and they suffered very severe casualties. Their losses in aircraft amounted to 147 destroyed and 64 damaged by enemy action; a further 73 were destroyed and 84 damaged by other causes, while losses in personnel, most of them highly trained and irreplaceable, amounted to over 6,100. No similar operation was ever attempted again.[1]

This of course could not be known to the British at the time and comments were focused on weak points in the defence.

In Crete, the airfields from which British machines could operate were few and vulnerable. But even if the number of airfields had been quadrupled, the fighter aircraft to operate from them were not available.[2]

This was of course well known to the British authorities in the Middle East,

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[1] A similar operation to capture Malta was planned in the spring of 1942; but the plan was not put into execution.

[2] The size and physical characteristics of Crete precluded the establishment of an adequate number of airfields, sufficiently dispersed. Had there been an adequate supply of fighter aircraft, and a reasonable number of well protected airfields, well spread, presumably the result of the preliminary offensive would have been similar to that of the Battle of Britain, September, 1940, and the invasion proper would not have been launched.

and had been frequently stressed in communications to the Home Authorities.[1]

In the light of what actually happened, it does seem, however, that the potentialities of the German Air Force had been under-estimated, and it is difficult to resist the impression that more might have been done during the six months between November 1940 and May 1941 to impede the airborne invasion, had those potentialities been more accurately foreseen.

The shortage of fighter aircraft threw the entire onus of the defence of the island on to the ground scheme of defence. The fact that during these six months no fewer than six officers commanded the British forces in Crete in itself argues against any great continuity in defence plans and preparation. On 30th April, a seventh, Major-General Freyberg, V.C., who actually fought the battle three weeks later, took over the Command.[2]

Maleme airfield was the primary objective of the German attack when it came. Here the defences consisted of perimeter defence, with general and local reserves, none of which were mobile, owing to lack of transport. Even if transport had been available, it is doubtful whether it could have been used, owing to the intensity of the enemy's bombing. There were no concrete works, and the troops were insufficiently dug in, on account of shortage of tools. There was a certain amount of wire defence, but stocks of wire were insufficient to wire in all positions.

Since the effective plan range of the Bofors gun did not exceed 800 yards, it was necessary to site them close to the edge of the airfield, in order to cover it effectually. Ten guns were mounted (six static and four mobile), and it was hoped that they would be able to establish effective mutual support for each other.

Broadly speaking, after achieving command of the air, the German plan envisaged three phases. The first phase consisted of violent bombing and machine gun attacks on the A.A. defences, on a scale so intensive as seriously to impair the morale of the A.A. gunners. This phase lasted about a week, and on the last day before the invasion, the attacks were practically continuous.[3] The second phase consisted of parachutist and air carrier landings, during which they relied on the confusion caused by the activities of the former to give them sufficient foothold to be able to concentrate large enough forces to hold a landing ground for their airborne reinforcements. The third and last phase was merely a question of transporting sufficient forces to overcome the

[1] The R.A.F. commitments in the Middle East were very heavy during the whole period of the British occupation of Crete. Malta (especially since the appearance of the German Air Force in Sicily in December 1940), Cyrenaica, the Suez Canal area, and Crete were all pressing commitments: trouble was brewing in Iraq: and the requirements for Greece and Turkey were a formidable drain, which rendered us dangerously weak in other areas.

The shortage of fighters in the Middle East was recognised at home, but here again were heavy commitments,—the bombing of Great Britain, which had been maintained on a heavy scale throughout the winter, the constant calls for protection of shipping, and the ever present threat of invasion, to mention but three.

Apart from the difficulties of shipping them to the Middle East, sufficient fighters were not in existence to satisfy all demands. It was part of the price we had to pay for the pre-war decades of disarmament.

[2]

Brigadier Tidbury	November 1940	—9th January 1941.
Major-General Gambier-Parry	9th January	—7th February.
Lt. Colonel Mather	7th February	—19th February.
Brigadier Galloway	19th February	—9th March.
Brigadier Chappell	20th March	—22nd April.
Major-General Weston	22nd April	—30th April.
Major-General Freyberg	30th April	—30th May.

The Senior Air Force Officer in Crete, who also acted as adviser to the G.O.C., was a Flight Lieutenant till 17th April 1941, when Group Captain G. R. Beamish was appointed with Headquarters at Canea.

[3] Throughout this phase it was clear the Luftwaffe was clearing the way for invasion. Hardly a bomb was dropped on the landing area, and then only small anti-personnel bombs.

defence by sheer weight of numbers. Throughout the operations, bomber aircraft gave the fullest support to the troops after they had been landed.[1]

Commenting on the first phase of the operations, General Weston, after referring to the preliminary air attacks on the Bofors and 3-inch guns, remarked:— " It must be admitted that under these conditions it is a matter of extreme difficulty to get guns' crews to stand up to their guns, and it is doubted whether on the day of the attack the Bofors defence reached anything approaching its full efficiency.

" In general, it is the moral effect of air blitzing which puts the guns out of action, and not the casualties incurred. At Maleme, after several days strafing, culminating on the 19th, only one N.C.O. had been killed and three other ranks wounded. At only one site (St. Johns Hill) were casualties serious, and here they reached 20 out of 100 . . ."[2]

With regard to the second phase—the initial airborne landings—it appears that the uncertainty and general insecurity resulting from this form of attack had not previously been fully appreciated. Adequate measures to counter them had certainly not been taken, but this was largely due to lack of matériel.[3]

On the first day of the invasion, for example, five gliders landed close to a 3·7-inch gun position. This battery was the last detailed for the issue of rifles and protective wire, and it was overrun by the enemy. All but 20 of the hundred or more men manning the guns were killed. The enemy held the gun pits and slit trenches, and were difficult to dislodge, though they were eventually ejected.

" One important point that emerges from the recent operations," to quote General Weston once more, " is that no A.A. or coast position is immune from glider or parachute attack.[4] In consequence it should be the established practice for all A.A. and coast positions to be wired as soon as established, and for all personnel in the battery to be provided with small arms, a large proportion of these being " Tommy guns ", since these are handier and quicker than rifles in dealing with short range attacks. A supply of hand and rifle grenades would also be invaluable for dislodging small parties of the enemy established close to a position . . ."

A week after the evacuation of Crete, the Commander-in-Chief, Middle

[1] These tactics proved successful in the Maleme-Suda area, where they were opposed by troops recently evacuated from Greece, with but little equipment except their rifles. It is to be noted, however, that at Heraklion, which was held by the relatively well-equipped original British Garrison of Crete, they did not succeed, and it was only the collapse in the Suda area which compelled this evacuation.

[2] General Weston was much concerned by the moral ascendancy which aircraft had obtained over ground troops. In the penultimate paragraph of his despatch he remarked:—

" The effect produced on troops appears out of all proportion to the actual damage inflicted . . . It appears clear that the casualties produced by air action are negligible in comparison with the effort expended. Machine gunning from the air is usually quite ineffective, and as regards bombing, the only serious casualties appear to have been produced when bombs of the heaviest calibre were used. In the last war, troops endured with fortitude much greater dangers, and casualties incomparably greater than those inflicted by air action, yet in Crete air action had produced a state of nerves in troops which seriously interfered with operations and movement both by day and night.

" It is considered of the first importance that the training of the soldier should be such as to discount the moral effect of the air, and to impress on him the comparatively small risk he runs from it."

[3] Rear-Admiral Rawlings remarked that the German disregard of cost in men and aircraft played no small part in their success, and that this is of " enormous importance, because few nations would act with such amazing disregard—aircraft crashlanding with one man escaping, etc."

[4] This statement applies with equal force to airfields or any other objective. The " Report on Defence of Aerodromes " (M.013220/41) by Lieutenant A. W. F. Sutton, R.N., who was second in command of the Maleme airfield deals with this aspect of airborne attack, and contains important recommendations with regard to defence measures.

East, signalled for the information of the Home Authorities eight "interim lessons" learned from the Battle. The application of six[1] of these lessons demands matériel which was never available in the Island: four[2] involve tactical employment of personnel and matériel; and four[3] imply a certain lack of preparation, or appreciation of the implications of airborne invasion.

With regard to the naval operations, the principal lesson which emerged from the narrative was one already recognised—that surface ships cannot operate close to enemy air bases without fighter support, except at the price of heavy losses. Study of the recorded details of the German air attacks on this occasion engenders surprise that even more damage was not inflicted by the weight of the offensive, and that, in fact, ships were able to operate at all under such conditions.

Although seaborne landings were prevented, and a limited amount of supplies and reinforcements were maintained until after the airborne invasion had compelled evacuation, it is doubtful, in view of the heavy losses incurred by the Fleet, how long this could have been kept up.

To sum up, the success of the Germans' airborne invasion of Crete must be ascribed to the complete ascendancy of the German Air Force, and to lack of adequate preparation on our part to counter the invasion launched by it. Both of these causes are mainly attributable to the British shortage of war matériel of all descriptions, which in turn directly resulted from the unfortunate pre-war policy of relying on the League of Nations to protect the British Empire.

By capturing Crete the Germans unquestionably gained a spectacular success, thereby enhancing the growing legend of the invincibility of their arms and adding considerably to their prestige.

If, owing to the trend of events elsewhere, it did not play the vital part it seemed to the Allies destined to at the time, it certainly brought the Axis substantial advantages. The establishment of the German Air Force at Salonica-Athens-Crete-Dodecanese constituted a strategic threat to Turkey, which must have been an important factor in the consideration of the latter as to her participation in the war. Crete, too, became the northern flank of the well-known "Bomb Alley" which seriously affected the operations of the Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean. And the loss of Suda Bay as an advanced base was a further cramp on its activities, though so long as there were adequate German air forces in Greece, Suda Bay and the north coast of Crete would have been of little value except at night; and the problem of the supply and maintenance of a garrison in the island would have been a very heavy commitment.

On the other hand, Fliegerkorps XI virtually ceased to exist for the critical months following the invasion, and thereby the Germans were deprived of a potent weapon which might have been used to exploit the armed rising then in progress in Iraq, or to support the Vichy forces which soon had to be tackled in Syria.

It is perhaps idle to speculate as to the effect of the Crete episode on the overall pattern of the war. Certain it is that the ships lost to the Mediterranean Fleet would have been very welcome in the months that lay ahead. Against that is to be placed the annihilation of Fliegerkorps XI. What that highly trained, exceedingly mobile and, at that time, still novel force might have accomplished in Syria or Iraq, or possibly later on in Russia cannot be gauged; but looking back after nearly 20 years it seems certain that the stout-hearted defence of Crete, though unsuccessful, yielded a substantial dividend, and that the Allied lives lost were not sacrificed in vain.

[1] Appendix G, (a), (b), (c), (d), (f), (h).
[2] Appendix G, (a), (c), (d), (e).
[3] Appendix G, (a), (b), (f), (g).

APPENDIX A

H.M. Ships employed on operations, with Commanding Officers 20th May—1st June 1941

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, FLAG IN *Medway* AT ALEXANDRIA:
ADMIRAL SIR ANDREW B. CUNNINGHAM, G.C.B., D.S.O.

1ST BATTLE SQUADRON	
1ST DIVISION	
**Warspite* (eight 15-inch guns)	Captain D. B. Fisher, C.B.E.
**Valiant* (eight 15-inch guns)	Captain C. E. Morgan, D.S.O.
2ND DIVISION	
Queen Elizabeth (eight 15-inch guns)	Flag, Vice-Admiral, H. D. Pridham-Wippell, C.V.O. Captain C. B. Barry, D.S.O.
**Barham* (eight 15-inch guns)	Captain G. C. Cooke
AIRCRAFT CARRIER	
**Formidable* (sixteen 4.5-inch guns) (12 fighters, 21 T.S.R.)	Flag, Rear-Admiral D. W. Boyd, C.B.E., D.S.C. Captain A. W. le T. Bisset
7TH CRUISER SQUADRON	
**Orion* (eight 6-inch guns)	Flag, Rear-Admiral H. B. Rawlings, O.B.E. Captain G. R. B. Back
**Ajax* (eight 6-inch guns)	Captain E. D. B. McCarthy
* (A) *Perth* (eight 6-inch guns)	Captain Sir P. W. Bowyer-Smyth, Bt.
15TH CRUISER SQUADRON	
**Naiad* (ten 5 ·25-inch guns)	Flag, Rear-Admiral E. L. S. King, C.B., M.V.O. Captain M. H. A. Kelsey, D.S.C.
†*Gloucester* (twelve 6-inch guns)	Captain H. A. Rowley
†*Fiji* (twelve 6-inch guns)	Captain P. B. R. W. William-Powlett
Phoebe (eight 5 ·25-inch guns)	Captain G. Grantham
A/A CRUISERS	
†*Calcutta* (eight 4-inch guns)	Captain D. M. Lees, D.S.O.
**Carlisle* (eight 4-inch guns)	Captain T. C. Hampton
Coventry (eight 4-inch guns)	Captain W. P. Carne
FAST MINELAYER	
Abdiel	Captain Hon. E. Pleydell-Bouverie, M.V.O.
MINELAYING SUBMARINE	
Rorqual	Commander R. H. Dewhurst, D.S.O.
SLOOPS	
Auckland (eight 4-inch guns)	Commander J. G. Hewitt, D.S.O.
Flamingo (six 4-inch guns)	Commander J. H. Huntley
Grimsby (four 4-inch guns)	Commander K. J. D'arcy

* Damaged. † Sunk. (A) Royal Australian Navy.

Corvette

Salvia (one 4-inch gun)	Lieut.-Cdr. J. I. Miller, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.D., R.N.R.

Special Service Ships

Glenroy	Captain Sir James Paget, Bt. (ret.)
Glengyle	Commander C. H. Petrie, (ret.)

Destroyer Flotillas

**Dido* (eight 5 ·25-inch guns)	Flag, Rear-Admiral (D) I. G. Glennie Captain H. W. U. McCall

2nd Flotilla

**Ilex* (D) (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Captain H. St. L. Nicolson, D.S.O.
Isis (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander C. S. B. Swinley, D.S.O.
Hotspur (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieutenant C. P. F. Brown
**Havock* (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. G. R. G. Watkins
Hero (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander H. W. Biggs, D.S.O.
Hasty (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. L. R. K. Tyrwhitt
†*Hereward* (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieutenant W. J. Munn
†*Imperial* (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr C. A. De W. Kitcat

7th Flotilla

* (A) *Napier* (D) (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Captain S. H. T. Arliss
* (A) *Nizam* (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. M. J. Clark, R.A.N.

5th Flotilla

†*Kelly* (D) (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Captain the Lord Louis Mountbatten, G.C.V.O., D.S.O.
**Kelvin* (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander J. H. Alison, D.S.O.
Jackal (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. R. M. P. Jonas
†*Kashmir* (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander H. A. King
Kipling (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander A. St. Clair-Ford

10th Flotilla

(A) *Stuart* (D) (five 4 ·7-inch guns)	Captain H. M. L. Waller, D.S.O.
(A) *Waterhen* (four 4-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. J. H. Swain
(A) *Voyager* (four 4-inch guns)	Commander J. C. Morrow, D.S.O.
(A) *Vendetta* (four 4-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. R. Rhoades
(A) *Vampire* (four 4-inch guns)	Commander J. A. Walsh
Decoy (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander E. G. McGregor, D.S.O.
Defender (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. G. L. Farnfield

14th Flotilla

Jervis (D) (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Captain P. J. Mack, D.S.O.
Janus (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander J. A. W. Tothill, D.S.C.
Jaguar (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. J. F. W. Hine
†*Juno* (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander St. J. R. J. Tyrwhitt
**Nubian* (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander R. W. Ravenhill
†*Greyhound* (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander W. R. Marshall-A'Deane, D.S.O., D.S.C.
Griffin (four 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieutenant K. R. C. Letts
Kandahar (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Commander W. G. A. Robson, D.S.O.
Kimberley (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. J. S. M. Richardson, D.S.O.
**Kingston* (six 4 ·7-inch guns)	Lieut.-Cdr. P. Somerville, D.S.O., D.S.C.

* Damaged. † Sunk. (A) Royal Australian Navy.

Shore-Based in Crete

N.O.I.C. Suda Bay	Captain J. A. V. Morse, D.S.O., R.N.
N.O.I.C. Heraklion	Captain M. H. S. MacDonald, D.S.O., O.B.E., R.N.

Patrol Craft

Kos. 21	Lieut.-Cdr I. H. Wilson, S.A.N.
†*Kos.* 22	Lieutenant H. D. Foxon, R.N.R.
†*Kos.* 23	Lieut.-Cdr. L. J. Reid, R.N.V.R.
†*Syvern*	Lieut.-Cdr. R. E. Clarke, R.N.R.
§*Moonstone*	Lieut.-Cdr. P. G. Britten, R.N.R.
Lanner	Skipper W. Stewart, R.N.R.

Minesweepers

†*Widnes*	Lieut.-Cdr. R. B. Chandler, R.N.
§*Derby*	Lieutenant F. C. V. Brightman, R.N.

Motor Launches

†M.L. 1011	Lieutenant A. H. Blake, R.N.R.
†M.L. 1030	Lieutenant W. M. O. Cooksey, R.N.V.R.
M.L. 1032	Lieutenant E. N. Rose, R.N.V.R.

Motor Torpedo Boats

†M.T.B. 67	
†M.T.B. 213	Lieutenant G. L. Cotton, R.N.V.R.
†M.T.B. 314	
†M.T.B. 216	Lieutenant C. L. Coles, R.N.V.R.
†M.T.B. 217	

* Damaged. † Sunk. (A) Royal Australian Navy.

§ Returned to Alexandria before German attack developed on 20/5.

APPENDIX A (1)

Organisation of H.M. Ships in Forces

DATE	FORCE	SENIOR OFFICER	SHIPS IN FORCE
15–20/5	A	Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell	*Queen Elizabeth, Barham, Jervis, Jaguar, Nizam, Defender, Imperial*.*
	B	Captain Rowley	*Gloucester, Fiji, Havock, Hotspur**
	C	Rear-Admiral Glennie	*Dido, Coventry, Juno, Kandahar, Kingston, Nubian*
	D	Rear-Admiral King	*Naiad, Perth, Greyhound, Hasty*
19–23/5	A.1	Rear-Admiral Rawlings	*Warspite, Valiant, Ajax†, Napier, Kimberley†, Janus†, Isis†, Hereward, Decoy, Hero, Griffin‡, Hotspur, Imperial†*
	B	Captain Rowley	*Gloucester¶, Fiji¶, Griffin, Greyhound¶*
	C	Rear-Admiral King	*Naiad, Perth, Calcutta‖, Carlisle‖, Kandahar, Kingston, Nubian, Juno***
	D	Rear-Admiral Glennie	*Dido, Orion, Ajax, Isis, Kimberley, Imperial, Janus*
	E	Captain Mack	*Jervis, Nizam, Ilex, Havock*
24–26/5	–	Captain McCarthy	*Ajax, Dido, Imperial, Kimberley, Hotspur*
25–27/5	A	Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell	*Queen Elizabeth, Barham, Formidable, Jervis, Janus, Kandahar, Nubian, Hasty, Hereward, Voyager, Vendetta, Ajax††, Dido††, Napier††, Kelvin††, Jackal††*
28–29/5	B	Rear-Admiral Rawlings	*Orion, Ajax, Dido, Decoy, Jackal, Imperial‡‡, Hotspur, Kimberley, Hereward‡‡*

* Transferred to A1, 19/5. ‖ Joined C, 21/5.
† Transferred to D, 20/5. ** Sunk, 21/5.
‡ Transferred to B, 20/5. †† Joined A, 26/5.
¶ Sunk, 22/5. ‡‡ Sunk, 29/5.

DATE	FORCE	SENIOR OFFICER	SHIPS IN FORCE
28–29/5	C	Captain Arliss	*Napier, Nizam, Kelvin, Kandahar*
29–30/5	D	Rear-Admiral King	*Phoebe, Perth, Glengyle, Calcutta, Coventry, Jervis, Janus, Hasty*
30–31/5	C	Captain Arliss	*Napier, Nizam, Kelvin, Kandahar*
31/5–1/6	D	Vice-Admiral King	*Phoebe, Abdiel, Kimberley, Hotspur, Jackal*

APPENDIX B

Coastal and A.A. Shore Defences of Crete, 20th May 1941

(See *Plan 2*)

COAST ARTILLERY	ANTI-AIRCRAFT
(A) *Heraklion*	
HARBOUR — One two-gun 4-inch battery	HARBOUR — Two 2-pdr. pompoms (ex. R.N.) AIRFIELD — Two two-gun sections 3-inch (M.N.B.D.O.) Six static Bofors Four mobile Bofors
(B) *Georgioupolis*	
For protection of ARMYRO beach. — One two-gun 4-inch battery One D.E.L.	
(C) *Suda Sector*	
KALIBES for counter-bombardment and protection of beach. — One two-gun 6-inch battery	STERNES, KORAKES, CANEA, SUDA POINT — Two 3·7-inch batteries in 4-gun sections. Two 0·5-inch—4 barrelled M.Gs. for local protection.
SUDA POINT for protection of harbour entrance. — One two-gun 4-inch battery. One 12-pdr. battery. Two D.E.Ls.	West of STERNES, ARONI, ST. JOHNS HILL, MALAXA, SUDA POINT — Five two-gun 3-inch sections.
SUDA ISLAND — Four Vickers M.Gs.	On shores of anchorage. — Twelve static Bofors.
CANEA for protection of beaches east of THEODORO Islands — One two-gun 6-inch Battery. One D.E.L.	Base area — Two static Bofors. " opportunity " sites. — Two mobile Bofors.

COAST ARTILLERY	ANTI-AIRCRAFT
(C) *continued*	A.A. SEARCHLIGHTS No. 304 S/L Battery (24 lights) provided 3 clusters sited round the approaches to Suda Island for anti-minelaying duties. Remaining 13 in single sites for normal illuminations.
(D) *Maleme*	
For protection of MALEME Beach. — One two-gun 4-inch battery. One D.E.L.	AIRFIELD — One two-gun 3-inch section. Six mobile Bofors. Four static Bofors.

Note:—Four 2-pdr. pom-poms and three D.E.Ls. (ex M.N.B.D.O.) were in process of erection on Suda Island when the attack started, but never got into action. Three 6-inch P4 guns and mountings (ex *India*) were in Crete, but could not be mounted as platforms and cage holdfasts had not arrived.

APPENDIX C
Summary of Air Attacks on H.M. Ships, 19th May—1st June

DATE	NUMBER OF ATTACKS	DAMAGE TO SHIPS (H.L.) High level attack (L.L.) Low level attack (D.B.) Dive bombing attack	AIRCRAFT CASUALTIES — SHOT DOWN		
			CERTAIN	PROBABLE	DAMAGED
19th May	5	Nil	None observed		
20th May	1	Nil	None observed		
21st May	Records incomplete: at least 26 (recorded)	*Juno* sunk (H.L. or L.L.) *Ajax* damaged by near miss	4	2	1
22nd May	Records incomplete: at least 67 (recorded): many more took place	*Greyhound*, *Gloucester*, *Fiji*, sunk (D.B.) *Naiad*, *Carlisle*, *Kingston*, *Warspite* (D.B.), *Valiant* (H.L.) damaged	2	6	3
23rd May	At least 32	*Kelly*, *Kashmir* (D.B.) sunk *Havock*, *Ilex* (D.B.) damaged	3	1	5
24th May	3	Nil	None observed		
25th May	6	Nil	None observed		
26th May	About 40	*Formidable*, *Nubian* (D.B.) hit and damaged	3	–	1
		Glenroy damaged (D.B.)	4*	1*	3*
27th May	About 40	*Barham* (D.B.) hit and damaged	2	1	3
28th May	13	*Ajax* and *Imperial* damaged	–	–	–

* Hit by fighters of F.A.A.

DATE	NUMBER OF ATTACKS	DAMAGE TO SHIPS (H.L.) High level attack (L.L.) Low level attack (D.B.) Dive bombing attack	AIRCRAFT CASUALTIES — SHOT DOWN		
			CERTAIN	PROBABLE	DAMAGED
29th May	20 on the 2 cruisers; many more on screen	*Hereward* (D.B.) hit and lost *Orion*, *Dido*, *Decoy* damaged (D.B.) *Nizam* slightly damaged (D.B.)	1	–	–
30th May	4	*Perth* (H.L.) *Kelvin* (D.B.) damaged	–	–	1
31st May	4	*Napier*, *Nizam* (D.B.) damaged	1	–	4
1st June	1	*Calcutta* (D.B.) sunk	–	–	–
			20†	11†	21

† In addition, 2 certainly, 2 probably shot down by Suda Bay M.T.B. Flotilla.

APPENDIX D

Casualties sustained by Mediterranean Fleet, 21st May—1st June 1941

DATE	SHIP	DAMAGE	TIME OUT OF ACTION
21st May	*Juno*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
21st May	*Ajax*	Near miss (bomb): shaft distortion. Ramming caique: bow bent	3 months
22nd May	*Naiad*	3 or 4 near misses (bomb): structural	3 weeks
22nd May	*Carlisle*	2 bomb hits: funnel, No. 2 gun	1 month, Port Said
22nd May	*Perth*	Near miss (bomb): 6-inch Fire Control	4½ months: repairs in Australia
22nd May	*Greyhound*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
22nd May	*Gloucester*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
22nd May	*Fiji*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
22nd May	*Warspite*	Hit starboard side: 1,000 lb. bomb	7 months: refit in U.S.A.
22nd May	*Valiant*	2 hits aft, (bombs)	Never out of action
22nd May	*Kingston*	Near miss (bomb): machinery and hull	Approx. 1 week
23rd May	*Havock*	Near miss (bomb): boiler room holed	Approx. 3 weeks
23rd May	*Ilex*	Near miss (bomb): propeller	Approx. 4 days
23rd May	*Kelly*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
23rd May	*Kashmir*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
26th May	*Formidable*	2 hits forward (bombs)	6 months including 3 months in U.S.A.
26th May	*Nubian*	Bomb hit aft: stern blown off	17 months: repairs in India

DATE	SHIP	DAMAGE	TIME OUT OF ACTION
27th May	*Barham*	Bomb hit on "Y" turret. Near miss: 2 bulges flooded	2 months: repairs at Durban
28th May	*Ajax*	Hit (bomb)	See above
29th May	*Imperial*	Sunk—after breakdown due to near miss (bomb)	—
29th May	*Hereward*	Sunk (Bombs)	—
29th May	*Orion*	2 bomb hits, "A" turret and bridge	8½ months: repairs in U.S.A.
29th May	*Dido*	Bomb hit, "B" turret	5 months: repairs in U.S.A.
30th May	*Perth*	Bomb hit	4½ months: repairs in Australia
30th May	*Kelvin*	Near miss (bomb)	6½ months: repairs in South Africa
31st May	*Napier*	Near miss (bomb) machinery	6 weeks
31st May	*Nizam*	Near miss (bomb) machinery	1 week
1st June	*Calcutta*	Sunk (Bombs)	—

APPENDIX E

Abstract of Casualties

Note. Ships underlined were sunk. Figures in brackets show approximate numbers of weeks *estimated* for repairs. Some of these were executed in the U.S.A. and Dominions, therefore ships were out of action for a longer period.

CAPITAL SHIPS AND AIRCRAFT CARRIER	CRUISERS	DESTROYERS	SMALL CRAFT BASED ON SUDA
Warspite (22)	*Gloucester*	*Juno*	A/S Whalers: *Kos.* 22
Barham (6)	*Fiji*	*Greyhound*	A/S Whalers: *Kos.* 23
Valiant (0)	*Calcutta*	*Kelly*	A/S Whalers: *Syvern*
Formidable (20)	*Ajax* (11)	*Kashmir*	*Widnes*
	Naiad (2½)	*Imperial*	M.L. 1030
	Perth	*Hereward*	M.L. 1011
	Orion (25)	*Kingston* (1)	M.T.B. 67
	Dido (12)	*Havock* (3)	M.T.B. 213
	Carlisle (3½)	*Ilex* (½)	M.T.B. 214
		Nubian (16)	M.T.B. 216
		Kelvin (8)	M.T.B. 217
		Napier (6)	T.L.C. A16
		Nizam (1)	T.L.C. A20
			T.L.C. A6
			8 A.L.Cs.
			8 M.L.Cs.
4 Damaged	3 Sunk 6 Damaged	6 Sunk 7 Damaged	16 Sunk

APPENDIX F

Evacuation of British and Imperial Troops from Crete: Numbers landed at Alexandria

Note. Exact figures of the numbers of troops embarked in H.M. Ships are not available. Figures below are from a count taken by the Army of those actually landed at Alexandria. As disembarkation usually took place at night, and many wounded were landed, these figures can be only approximately correct. Those killed on passage are not included.

DATE	EVACUATION CRAFT	PLACE OF EMBARKATION	NUMBERS EVACUATED
Prior to 26th–27th May		—	112
26th–27th May	*Abdiel*, *Hero*, *Nizam*	Suda	930
28th–29th May	Force " B ". *Orion*, *Dido*, *Kimberley*, *Decoy*, *Jackal*, *Hotspur*	Heraklion	3,486
	Force " C ". *Napier*, *Nizam*, *Kelvin*, *Kandahar*	Sphakia	680
29th–30th May	Force " D ". *Phoebe*, *Glengyle*, *Perth*, *Jervis*, *Janus*, *Hasty*	Sphakia	6,029
30th–31st May	Force " C ". *Napier*, *Nizam*	Sphakia	1,510
31st May–1st June	Force " D ". *Phoebe*, *Abdiel*, *Jackal*, *Hotspur*, *Kimberley*	Sphakia	3,710
	By Air	Sphakia	54
			16,511*

* Allowing for men killed on passage, and for probable miscounting on disembarkation, it is believed that about 17,000 troops were evacuated from Crete.

APPENDIX G

Lessons of Battle of Crete

(Extract from signal from C.-in-C. Middle East, 6th June 1941)

(*a*) Aerodromes being enemy main objective must be organised for all round defence (including Pill Boxes), specially as parachutists may drop behind defences. Defences, including artillery, must be in depth. Artillery in sites with cover proved more useful than those in open with all round field of fire.

(*b*) All ranks of all arms must be armed with rifles and bayonets and high proportion of Tommy guns to protect themselves, and in the case of Artillery, their guns.

(*c*) By day it should be easy to deal with parachutists, but it must be remembered that parachutists may land at night and secure an aerodrome. Main problem is to deal with enemy airborne troops, and as it is impossible to be strong everywhere, there must be strong mobile reserves, centrally placed, preferably with tanks.

(*d*) Defence must be offensive. Immediate action by mobile reserves essential to prevent enemy settling down, and in order to secure quick action, good system of intercommunication is vital. Delay may allow enemy air to prevent movement.

(*e*) During bombing phase, A.A. and L.M.Gs. should remain silent unless required to protect own aircraft on the ground.

(*f*) A.A. lay-out should include dummy A.A. guns and alternative positions. Positions of A.A. guns should be continually changed.

(*g*) Arrangements must be made quickly to render aerodromes liable to attack temporarily unfit for landing.

(*h*) Equally important to quick action of mobile reserve is position of fighter aircraft support, the existence of which might prevent any airborne landing from succeeding, or at least reduce enemy effort.

Foregoing are interim lessons, which may be modified as result of views of special inter-services committee examining operations.

APPENDIX H

Chronology of Battle of Crete

From 14th May to 1st June 1941

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Wednesday, 14th May	Heraklion and Maleme airfields heavily machine-gunned from air.			
Night, 14th–15th May		Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell with Force "A" left Alexandria for Cretan waters.	Wellingtons raided Menidi and Hassani airfields (Greece). Fires and explosions.	
Thursday, 15th May				
Night, 15th–16th May		*Gloucester* and *Fiji* landed 2nd Bn. Leicester Regt. at Heraklion.		
Friday, 16th May	Heavy bombing and machine-gun air attack on Maleme and Heraklion airfields. Suda Bay dive bombed: also Canea.			
Night, 16th–17th May		Cruisers and destroyers standing by to sweep Aegean.	Two Wellingtons bombed Maritza, Rhodes.	
Saturday, 17th May	Suda Bay bombed by Ju. 87s. Heavy air raids on Maleme and Heraklion airfields.		*Dawn.* Machine-gun attacks by night fighters on airfields at:— Hassani. 20 Ju. 52, 30 Me. 109, 5 He. 126. Argos. 45–50 Me. 109. Malaoli. 35 Ju. 87, 45 Me. 109, 60 Me. 110. considerable damage inflicted.	

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Night, 17th–18th May		Cruisers and destroyers recalled to Alexandria.	Wellingtons bombed Calato airfield (Rhodes).	
Sunday, 18th May	Heavy air raids on Suda Bay, Maleme and Heraklion airfields.			
Night, 18th–19th May		S.S. Ship *Glengyle* landed 700 Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, Tymbaki.	Seven Wellingtons bombed Hassani and Eleusis airfields (Greece).	
Monday, 19th May	Continuous bombing and low flying machine-gun attacks on Maleme and Heraklion airfields throughout the day. Dive bombing attacks on Suda Bay at 0800 and 1915.	Rear-Admiral Rawlings with Force "A1" relieved Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell with Force "A", south-west of Crete.		R.A.F. in Crete (being reduced to seven fighters fit for action) left for Egypt.
Night, 19th–20th May		Three "I" tanks landed at Tymbaki.		
Tuesday, 20th May	AIRBORNE INVASION COMMENCES 0815. Heavy air bombardment of Maleme and Suda areas, followed by glider and parachute landings. P.M. 150 aircraft attacked Heraklion. 1730. Parachute and troop carrier landings at Heraklion and Retimo.	Forces "A1", "B" and "D" to westward of Crete: Force "C" to southward of Kaso Strait.		
Night, 20th–21st May	At nightfall, situation at Maleme and Canea in hand; but about 1,200 out of 3,000 enemy landed unaccounted for.	Cruisers and destroyers patrolling north and north-west of Crete. Three destroyers bombarded Scarpanto airfield.	Ten Wellingtons attacked airfields at Topolia, Menidi, Eleusis and Molaoi in Greece. (Four failed to find objectives.)	

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Wednesday, 21st May	Savage air bombardment in Maleme-Canea area continued. German troop carriers landed regardless of losses, and enemy concentrated between Aliakanou and Canea, and immediately west of Maleme airfield. Maleme airfield captured by enemy. At Retimo and Heraklion successful counter attacks by British, Greek and Cretan troops.	Forces "A1", "B" and "D" to westward of Crete. Force "C" to southward of Kaso. *Juno* sunk by air attack.		
Night, 21st–22nd May		Cruisers and destroyers patrolling north and north-west of Crete. Rear-Admiral Glennie's force destroyed convoy of troop-carrying caiques north of Canea.		
Thursday, 22nd May	Counter attack by New Zealand troops before dawn reached Maleme airfield, but heavy dive bombing and machine-gunning forced withdrawal. Fighting continued throughout the day; but by 2100 the situation had deteriorated, and withdrawal to a new line commenced. Large enemy reinforcements by carriers. At Heraklion situation well in hand. Between 20 and 30 troop-carrying aircraft destroyed by A.A. fire.	Rear-Admiral King's force encountered convoy south of Milos. Heavily attacked by aircraft; *Naiad* and *Carlisle* damaged; joined by Rear-Admiral Rawlings' battle squadron in Kithera Channel. *Greyhound*, *Gloucester*, *Fiji* sunk. *Warspite* and *Valiant* hit by bombs.		
Night, 22nd–23rd May		Destroyers patrolling north of Crete. *Kelly* and *Kashmir* sank caiques in Canea Bay, and bombarded Maleme. King of Greece left Crete in *Decoy*.	Wellingtons dropped medical stores and supplies at Heraklion and Retimo.	0408–23. C.-in-C. Mediterranean orders all naval forces to return to Alexandria.

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Friday, 23rd May	New line formed east of Maleme in Maleme–Canea sector. Very heavy air attacks on our troops in this sector. Steady flow of enemy reinforcements in troop carriers. At Heraklion ultimatum demanding surrender rejected by British and Greek Commanders.	Naval forces returned to Alexandria. *Kashmir* and *Kelly* sunk by 24 dive bombers. The five M.T.Bs in Suda Bay sunk by air attack.	*Dawn.* 12 Blenheims bombed enemy at Maleme. Blenheims and Marylands bombed 150 enemy planes on ground at Maleme; at least 10 destroyed. Four Ju. 52s disembarking troops destroyed.	
Night, 23rd–24th May		*Jaguar* and *Defender* disembarked ammunition in Suda Bay.	Eight Wellingtons bombed enemy aircraft at Maleme. Fires started (three Wellingtons lost).	
Saturday, 24th May	Very heavy bombing attack on Canea British Army Headquarters withdrawn to Naval Headquarters Suda. A.A. defences Suda seriously reduced by air attacks. Fighting continued in Maleme-Canea area. At Heraklion, Greeks short of ammunition.		Five Hurricanes machine-gunned enemy positions near Heraklion.	C.-in-C. Mediterranean informed Chiefs-of-Staff that scale of air attack now made it no longer possible for Navy to operate in the Aegean or vicinity of Crete *by day*.
Night, 24th–25th May		Light cruisers and destroyers swept north coast of Crete.	Wellingtons dropped medical stores at Retimo.	
Sunday, 25th May	Continuous air attacks on Imperial troops west of Canea all day. Enemy captured Galatos: British light tanks and New Zealand troops recaptured it. Maleme no longer under fire. Troop carriers pour in enemy reinforcements.		Blenheims, Hurricanes and Marylands heavily bombed and machine-gunned enemy aircraft on Maleme airfield, destroyed about 24; one Ju. 52 shot down over airfield: one Ju. 88 shot down over Suda (one Maryland, three Hurricanes missing). P.M. Five Blenheims bombed aircraft at Maleme (three Blenheims lost).	

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Night, 25th–26th May	New British line formed in Canea-Maleme sector broken late at night after repeated attacks.	Light cruisers and destroyers repeat sweep of night before.	Four Wellingtons bombed Maleme beach. Two Wellingtons bombed Scarpanto.	
Monday, 26th May	Enemy attacks force Imperial troops to fall back on Canea. At Heraklion, two "I" tanks and Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders broke through from south; large numbers of enemy successfully held.	F.A.A. attack on Scarpanto airfield. Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell's Force heavily attacked by aircraft from African coast; *Formidable* and *Nubian* damaged.	P.M. Five Ju. 52s carrying troops and one Me. 109 shot down by Hurricanes over Maleme. Further Ju. 52s believed destroyed by three Hurricanes which failed to return.	
Night, 26th–27th May	Suda defence line collapses. Retreat commenced.	*Abdiel* and two destroyers landed 750 S.S. troops and stores at Suda. *Glenroy* with reinforcements forced to turn back on account of damage from bombs.	Seven Wellingtons, two Blenheims bomb enemy aircraft at Maleme; five believed destroyed. Fires and explosions.	
Tuesday, 27th May	Troops from Suda line pouring back in some disorder. Retreat directed on Sphakia. Major-General Weston assumes command of rearguard. Heraklion sector still holding out; but major attack by Germans expected.	Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell's force attacked by air; *Barham* hit. Force recalled to Alexandria.	Fighter Blenheims and two Hurricanes shot down three Ju. 88s north of Crete. (One Blenheim missing.) Blenheims bombed 100 aircraft on ground at Maleme, causing much damage. (Three Blenheims missing.)	0824. General Wavell informs Prime Minister that Crete is no longer tenable. Chiefs of Staff order evacuation. A.O.C. Middle East promises all possible fighter protection for our ships.
Night, 27th–28th May			Four Wellingtons bombed about 100 aircraft on ground at Maleme: fires and explosions. Four Wellingtons bombed Scarpanto airfield: small fires.	
Wednesday, 28th May	N.O.I.C. Suda joined Military Headquarters in cave at Sphakia. Retreat to Sphakia. Enemy reinforcements dropped in the Heraklion area.	Rear-Admiral Rawlings with Force "B" (3 cr., 6 ds.) left Alexandria for Heraklion. Air attacks P.M. *Ajax* damaged. Captain Arliss with Force "C" (4 ds.) to Sphakia.		

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Night, 28th–29th May		Force " B " embarked Heraklion garrison about 4,000 troops. *Imperial* sunk on leaving. Force " C " embarked 700 at Sphakia.	Eight Wellingtons bombed Scarpanto; fires and explosions.	
Thursday, 29th May	Rearguard under Major-General Weston carrying out orderly retreat. Sphakia heavily bombed and machine-gunned in evening.	Force " B " heavily attacked by aircraft. *Hereward* lost. *Orion* and *Dido* hit; severe casualties to troops on board. Forces " B " and " C " arrived Alexandria P.M. Rear-Admiral King with Force " D " (2 cr., *Glengyle*, 2 A.A. cr., 3 ds.) on passage to Sphakia.		After interviews with officers returned from Crete, decision taken to continue evacuation 30/31. R.A.F. aircraft sent to order troops at Retimo to Plaka failed to return; decided to send no ships to Plaka.
Night, 29th–30th May		Force " D " embarked 6,000 men, Sphakia.	Six Wellingtons bombed Efialto airfield, Scarpanto. Two Wellingtons bombed Katavia airfield, Rhodes. Two Wellingtons bombed Maleme.	
Friday, 30th May	*Dawn.* Successful rearguard action by two cruiser tanks and three bren gun carriers south of Askyphos.	Force " D " arrived Alexandria P.M. *Perth* hit by bomb on passage. Captain Arliss with two destroyers on passage to Sphakia (Force " C ").		Creforce requests last lift for 3,000 men from Sphakia, 31st May–1st June.
Night, 30th–31st May	General Freyberg V.C., and Captain Morse, R.N. returned to Egypt in Sunderland. Major-General Weston in command in Crete.	Force " C " embarked 1,500 men, at Sphakia.	Ten Wellingtons bombed Maleme and Heraklion.	
Saturday, 31st May	Major-General Weston's estimate of numbers remaining in vicinity of beaches:— (*a*) Fighting troops 4,000 (*b*) Formed bodies of mixed details 3,500 (*c*) Scattered details in Sphakia area 1,500 Grand total 9,000	Vice-Admiral King in *Phoebe* with *Abdiel* and three destroyers on passage to Sphakia. Force " C " arrived Alexandria P.M., *Napier* damaged by near miss on passage.	Fighter protection for Force " C " shot down three Ju. 88s, one Cant. Fighters also carried out successful combats against enemy attacking Vice-Admiral King's Force.	Admiralty informed that evacuation would cease after 31st May–1st June. General Wavell authorises capitulation of troops remaining in Crete on 1st June.

DATE	ASHORE IN CRETE	BRITISH NAVAL OPERATIONS	BRITISH AIR OPERATIONS	REMARKS
Night, 31st May–1st June	Major-General Weston orders senior British officer remaining in Crete to capitulate, and returns to Egypt in Sunderland.	Vice-Admiral King's Force embarked nearly 4,000 troops at Sphakia.	Wellingtons bombed Heraklion.	
Sunday, 1st June		*Calcutta* dive-bombed and sunk while on passage to meet Vice-Admiral King's Force. Force arrived at Alexandria P.M.		Admiralty informed evacuation terminated. MEDITERRANEAN FLEET 2 battleships 1 cruiser 1 A.A. cruiser 1 minelayer 9 destroyers } remaining fit for service.

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Glengyle, H.M.S., special service ship, lands reinforcements, Tymbaki, 7; anxiety for, 27; at Sphakia evacuation, 28.

Glennie, Rear-Admiral I. G., R.A.(D), S.O. Force ' C ', 7; S.O. Force ' D ', 8; breaks up enemy troop convoy, 10; withdraws from Aegean, 10, 11 (and *note*); 16.

Glenroy, H.M.S., special service ship, attempts to land reinforcements, Tymbaki, 16, 18 (and *note*); damaged by near misses, 19; 21.

Gliders, used by Germans, 8.

Gloucester, H.M.S., cruiser, 6; lands Leicesters at Heraklion, 7; 8; 11; 12 (*note*); stands by *Greyhound*, bombed and sunk, 13 (and *note*).

Goering, Reichs Marshal H., Head of German Air Force, decision as to air landings, 4.

Greece, Italian invasion leads to British garrison in Crete, 1; British troops sent to and evacuated, 2; German air bases in, 3, 4 (and *note*); 6; proximity of air bases to Crete, 15 (*note*); King of Greece leaves Crete, 16.

Greyhound, H.M.S., destroyer, 6, 7 (and *note*); 11; sinks caique, bombed and sunk, 13; death of C.O., 14 (and *note*).

Griffin, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 11.

Hampton, Captain T.C., R.N., C.O., *Carlisle*, killed in action, 12.

Hasty, H.M.S., destroyer, 6; engages enemy troop convoy, 10; Sphakia evacuation, 28.

Havock, H.M.S., destroyer, 6; damaged by near miss, 15.

Heraklion, (or Candia), Crete, airfield, 2; detached army command, 3; probability of seaborne invasion, 5; airborne attack, 8; 11; 15; allied successes, German ultimatum rejected, 18; British reinforcements arrive, 22 (and *note*); 23; evacuation plan, 25; evacuation, 26 (and *note*).

Hereward, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; engages troop convoy, 10; Heraklion evacuation, 25; bombed and sunk, 26 (and *notes*).

Hero, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; embarks important personages from Crete, 15; 17; attempts to land reinforcements, 18; lands reinforcements, Suda, 19.

Hine, Lieut.-Commander J. F., C.O. *Jaguar*, lands army stores, Suda, 18.

Hotspur, H.M.S., destroyer, 6; 7; 20; Heraklion evacuation, 25; takes off *Imperial*'s crew and troops, 26; Sphakia evacuation, 29.

Hydra, island in Aegean, 9.

Ilex, H.M.S., destroyer, 6; bombards Scarpanto airfield, 9; 11; damaged by near miss, 15.

Imperial, H.M.S., destroyer, 6; 9; 20; Heraklion evacuation, near missed, 25; breaks down and sunk by *Hotspur*, 26.

Invasion, *Airborne*, plan, 3 (and *notes*), 4 (and *note*); 5; 8; 17; 33; *seaborne*, plan, 4 (and *notes*); prevention of, 5; 11; 23; 31; 36.

Isis, H.M.S., destroyer, 7.

Italy—Italian, invasion of Greece, 1; torpedo boats *Lupo* damaged, 10, and *Sagittario* driven off, 11 (*note*), 12; non-intervention by Fleet, 31 (and *note*); high level bombing, 31.

Jackal, H.M.S., destroyer, 11; 14; 15; 16; 21 (and *note*); Heraklion evacuation, 25; Sphakia evacuation, 29.

Jaguar, H.M.S., destroyer, 6; 16; 17; lands munitions, Suda, 18; 19; Sphakia evacuation, 28.

Janus, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 9; engages troop convoy, 10; Sphakia evacuation, 28.

Jervis, H.M.S., destroyer, (D) 14, 6; bombards Scarpanto, 9; 11; 15; Sphakia evacuation, 28.

Jugoslavia, German attack, 2.

Juno, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 8; engages M.A.S. boats, 9; bombed and sunk, 10.

Kandahar, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 8; engages M.A.S. boats, 9; rescues survivors from *Juno*, 10, *Greyhound*, 13, *Fiji*, 14; 16; 17; 20; 21; Sphakia evacuation, 25; 29.

Kashmir, H.M.S., destroyer, 11; 14; operations, Canea Bay, 15; bombed and sunk, 16 (and *note*); 17.

Kaso Island—Strait, east of Crete, 6; 9; 10; 16; 20; 21; 26.

Kelly, H.M.S., destroyer, (D) 5, 11; joins Force 'A1 ', 14; operations, Canea Bay, 15; bombed and sunk, 16; 17.

Kelvin, H.M.S., destroyer, 11; 14; 15; Sphakia evacuations, 25, 29.

Kimberley, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 9; engages troop convoy, 10; 20; Heraklion evacuation, 25, 26; Sphakia evacuation, 29.

King, Rear-Admiral E. L. S., C.B., M.V.O., C.S.15, S.O. Force ' D ', 7; S.O. Force ' C ', flag in *Naiad*, 8; 9; 11; encounter with troop convoy, 12 (and *notes*); detaches *Gloucester* and *Fiji* to stand by *Greyhound*, 13; 14; 15; 17; S.O. Sphakia evacuations, flag in *Phoebe*, 28, 29; promoted Vice-Admiral, 29 (*note*); 30.

King, Commander H. A., R.N., C.O., *Kashmir*, 16; rescued by *Kipling*, 17.

Kingston, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 8; rescues *Juno*'s survivors, 10; engages enemy destroyer, 12; rescues survivors from *Greyhound*, 13, *Fiji*, 14; 16; 17.

Kipling, H.M.S., destroyer, 11; 14; 15; rescues *Kelly* and *Kashmir* survivors, 17 (and *note*); 19.

Kissamo Bay, N.W. Crete, 5; 15.

Kithera Island—Channel, S.E. of Cape Matapan, 9; 11; 12.

' Layforce ' reinforcements to Crete, 18.

Laycock, Brigadier L. E., 19.

Leicester Regiment, 1; 7.

Lemnos, island in Aegean, *Rorqual* operates off, 6.

Leros, island in Aegean, 6.

Levkas, island, west coast of Greece, minefield off, 6.

Liverpool, H.M.S., cruiser, Base defence party, Suda, 1.

Löhr, General, Commander, Luftflotte 4, 3.

McCarthy, Captain E. D. B., R.N., C.O., *Ajax*, 20.

MacDonald, Captain M. H. S., R.N., N.O.I.C. Suda, relieved and appointed N.O.I.C. Heraklion, 3 (and *note*); commended by Rear-Admiral Rawlings, 26 (*note*).

Mack, Captain P. J., D.S.O., R.N., (D) 14, C.O., *Jervis*, S.O. Force ' E ', 9; 11; 15; 16.

Malea, Cape, S.E. Greece, 9.

Maleme, west of Canea, airfield sited by F.A.A., 2; 3; enemy air attacks on, 4, 8; fighting in area, 8, 22, 23; captured by Germans, 17; German reinforcements, 22; evacuation arrangements, 24; primary objective of German attack, 34; 35.

Marshall-A'Deane, Commander W. R., D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N., C.O., *Greyhound*, 7 (*note*); loses life in *Fiji* rescue work, 14; awarded Albert Medal, 14 (*note*).

Matapan, Cape, South Greece, 9.

Milo, island in Aegean, German troop convoy encountered, 11.

Minelaying, British, 6; 9; 17.

M.N.B.D.O., 1 (*note*); 31.

Morse, Captain J. A. V., D.S.O., R.N., N.O.I.C. Suda, 2; 3; 23 (and *note*); 24 (*note*); H.Q. shifted to Sphakia, 25; returns to Egypt, 29.

M.A.S. boats, attack Force ' C ', 9.

M.T.Bs, 10th flotilla, based on Suda, 6; destroyed by air attack, 17.

Mountbatten, Captain Lord Louis, G.C.V.O., D.S.O., R.N., (D) 5, C.O., *Kelly*, leaves Malta, 11; joins Force 'A1 ', 14; operations in Canea Bay, 15; *Kelly* sunk, 16; picked up by *Kipling*, 17.

Munitions for Army, *see* stores.

Munn, Lieutenant W. J., R.N., C.O., *Hereward*, 26.

Naiad, H.M.S., cruiser, flag, Rear-Admiral King, 6; 7; 8; engages M.A.S. boats, 9; supports *Perth*, 11; encounter with troop convoy, damaged by bombs, 12 (and *note*).

Napier, H.M.A.S., destroyer, (D) 7, 7; Sphakia evacuations, 25, 29.

Naval Forces, British, *see* Forces.

Naval operations, object of, 5.

New Zealand, troops, 3; 17; 22; Prime Minister, 29.

Night flying, German, 2 (*note*).

Nizam, H.M.A.S., destroyer, 6; bombards Scarpanto airfield 9; 11; 15; 18; lands reinforcements, Suda, 19; Sphakia evacuation, minor damage, 25, 29.

Nubian, H.M.S., destroyer, 7; 12; rescues *Juno*'s survivors, 10; 20; stern blown off by bomb, 21.

Object, of Naval Operations, 5.

Orion, H.M.S., cruiser, 8; engages enemy troop convoy, 10 (and *note*); 12 (*note*); flag, Rear-Admiral Rawlings, 25; badly damaged, Heraklion evacuation, 26, 27 (and *notes*).

Parachute troops, 3 (and *note*); 8; 17; 33; function, 34; counter-measures, 35 (and *note*).

Pelly, Group-Captain C. B. R., R.A.F., attached to Staff of C.-in-C., Med., 24 (and *note*).

Perth, H.M.A.S., cruiser, 6 (*note*); 7; 8; sinks caique, 11; encounter with troop convoy, 12; Sphakia evacuation, 28.

Pegadia Bay, Scarpanto, 9.

Phalconera, island in Aegean, 9.

Phoebe, H.M.S., cruiser, 6 (and *note*); flag, Rear-Admiral King, Sphakia evacuation, 28; flag, Vice-Admiral King, 29 (and *note*).

Plaka Bay, Crete, south coast, 24; 28.

Plans, Army defence, 3; naval plan, 6; evacuation, 24; German plan, 4 (and *notes*).

Pleydell-Bouverie, Captain Hon. E., M.V.O., R.N., C.O., *Abdiel*, 18.

Pori, island, Kithera channel, 13.

Pridham-Wippell, Vice-Admiral H. D., C.V.O., V.A.1, S.O., Force 'A', flag in *Queen Elizabeth*, 6; 20; covers F.A.A. attack on Scarpanto airfield, 21.

Protector, H.M.S., net-layer, 17 (*note*); 19.

Puttick, Brigadier E., D.S.O., in command of Maleme sector, 3.

Queen Elizabeth, H.M.S., battleship, flag, Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippell, 6; 20; 21.

Queen's Royal Regiment, 18.

Radar, (R.D.F.), value of, 10 (*note*); danger of lockouts becoming R.D.F. minded, 14 (*note*).

Ravenhill, Commander R. W., R.N., C.O., *Nubian*, 21.

Rawlings, Rear-Admiral H. B., O.B.E., C.S.7, S.O. Force 'A1 ', flag in *Warspite*, 7; 8 (and *note*); 11; proceeds to assistance of Rear-Admiral King, 12; 13; remark on radar, 14 (*note*); suggests shifting rallying point further east, 15 (and *note*); remark on signal lag, 15 (*note*); 16; S.O. Force ' B ', flag in *Orion*, 25; Heraklion evacuation, 26 (and *notes*), 27; decisions re damaged *Imperial* and *Hereward*, 26 (and *notes*); on German disregard of cost, 35 (*note*).

Reinforcements for *British* forces in Crete, 7; 18; 19; *German*, 17.

Retimo, north coast, Crete, airfield constructed, 2; defence plan, 3; 5; air attacks, 8; 10; 11; 24; decision to evacuate garrison from Plaka Bay cancelled, 28 (and *note*).

Robson, Commander W. G. A., D.S.O., R.N., C.O., *Kandahar*, 14.

Rorqual, H.M.S., minelaying submarine, 6; 17.

Rowley, Captain H. A., R.N., C.O., *Gloucester*, S.O., Force ' B ', 6; 8; loses life in *Gloucester*, 13 (*note*).

Royal Air Force, 2; disabilities in Battle of Crete, 4 (and *note*); support to Army, 4, 22, 23; support to Navy, 24; 25; 28; 32; failure to contact Force ' B ', 26 (and *note*), 27; heavy commitments in Middle East, 34 (and *note*).

Royal Marines (of M.N.B.D.O.), fight rearguard action, 30, 31; commended by Major-General Freyberg, V.C., 31 (*note*).

St. Clair-Ford, Commander A., R.N., C.O., *Kipling*, decision to rejoin Capt. (D), 15; rescues *Kelly* and *Kashmir* survivors, 16, 17.

Scarpanto, island, Dodecanese, Italian airfield bombarded, 9; attacked by F.A.A., 20, 21, and by R.A.F., 23; 25.

Searchlights, 2 (*note*).

Selinos Kastelli, S.W. Crete, landing of reinforcements prevented by weather, 18.

Sephton, Petty Officer A. E., *Coventry*, posthumous award of Victoria Cross, 7 (*note*).

Sidi Barrani, Egypt, survivors from Crete arrive, 30, 31.

Sitia, N.W. Crete, 5.

Somerville, Lieut.-Cdr. P., D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N., C.O., *Kingston*, 14.

South African Air Force, (S.A.A.F.), 22.

Sphakia, South crete, 22; chosen as embarkation point, evacuation, 24; lack of facilities, 25 (and *note*); evacuations, 25, 28, 29.

Stampalia, island in Aegean, 9.

Stores for Army, landed in Crete, 3; 16; 17; 18; 19; 31.

Stuart, H.M.A.S., destroyer, (D) 10, 11; 16; escorts *Glenroy*, 19; 28.

Student, General, Commander Fliegerkorps XI, 3; remarks on situation, 20/21 May, 8 (*note*).

Suda, North Crete, established as advanced base, 1; organisation as supply base, 2; 4; enemy air attacks, 2, 5, 8, 17, 18; M.T.B. Flotilla destroyed, 17; Army H.Q. moved to, 18; local defence vessels, 18 (*note*); stores landed at, 19; collapse of Suda-Maleme front, 22; N.O.I.C. Suda, 3 (and *note*), 15, 23 (and *note*), shifts H.Q. to Sphakia, 25, leaves Crete, 29; defences, App. B.

Sunrise and set, times of, 8 (*note*).

Swinley, Commander C. S. B., D.S.C., R.N., C.O., *Isis*, attempt to land ' Layforce ', 18.

Tanks, British, landed at Tymbaki, 7; 22.

Tedder, Air Marshal A. W., C.B., A.O.C.-in-C., Middle East, 24; congratulatory message to C.-in-C., Med., 32.

Thrasher, H.M.S., submarine, rescues Crete survivors, 31 (*note*).

Torbay, H.M.S., submarine, rescues Crete survivors, 31 (*note*).

Troop carrying aircraft, 3; 8; 17; 18; 35 (and *notes*).

Tymbaki, South Crete, 7; 16; 18; 21.

Valiant, H.M.S., battleship, 7; hit by bombs, 14; 15 (*note*).

Vasey, Brigadier C. A., D.S.O., Commander, Retimo-Georgioupolis Sector, 3.

Vendetta, H.M.A.S., destroyer, 11; 16; 20.

Voyager, H.M.A.S., destroyer, 11; 16; 20.

Waller, Captain H. M. L., D.S.O., R.A.N., (D) 10, C.O., *Stuart*, 11; 16.

Warspite, H.M.S., battleship, flag, Rear-Admiral Rawlings, 7; hit by bomb, 13 (and *notes*); 15 (*note*).

Wavell, General Sir A., K.C.B., C.M.G., M.C., C.-in-C., Middle East, 1; 18; informs Prime Minister Crete untenable, 23; recalls Major-General Freyberg, 29; authorises capitulation, 29; personal message to Sir Andrew Cunningham, 32; interim lessons, 36, App. G.

Weather, prevents landing at Selinos Kastelli, 18.

Weston, Major-General E. C., R.M., arrives Suda, 2; remarks on troops evacuated from Greece, 2 (*note*); Commander, Suda Sector, 3; commands rearguard, retreat to Sphakia, 22; commands troops in Crete, 29, 34 (*note*); recalled to Egypt, 29; remarks on moral effect of air bombing, defence against air invasion, etc., 35 (and *note*).

William-Powlett, Captain P. B. R. W., R.N., C.O., *Fiji*, 13; remarks on enemy dive bombing, 14 (*note*).

Wynne, Commander T. C. T., Executive Officer, *Orion*, takes over command, 27.

York and Lancaster Regiment, 1.

Zone Time (minus 3), 8 (*note*).

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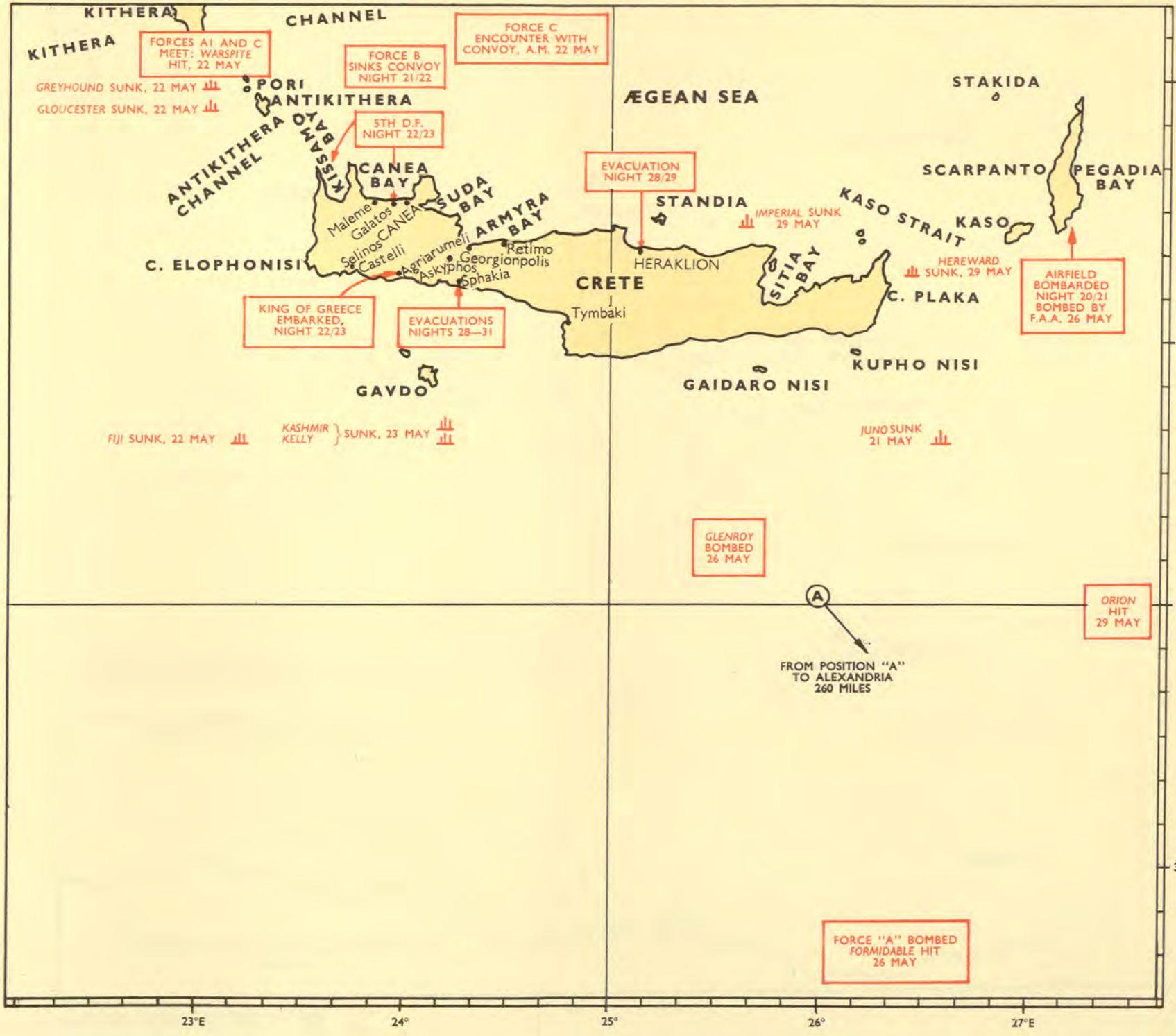
BATTLE OF CRETE APPROXIMATE POSITIONS OF NAVAL EVENTS, 20th MAY—1st JUNE 1941 PLAN 1



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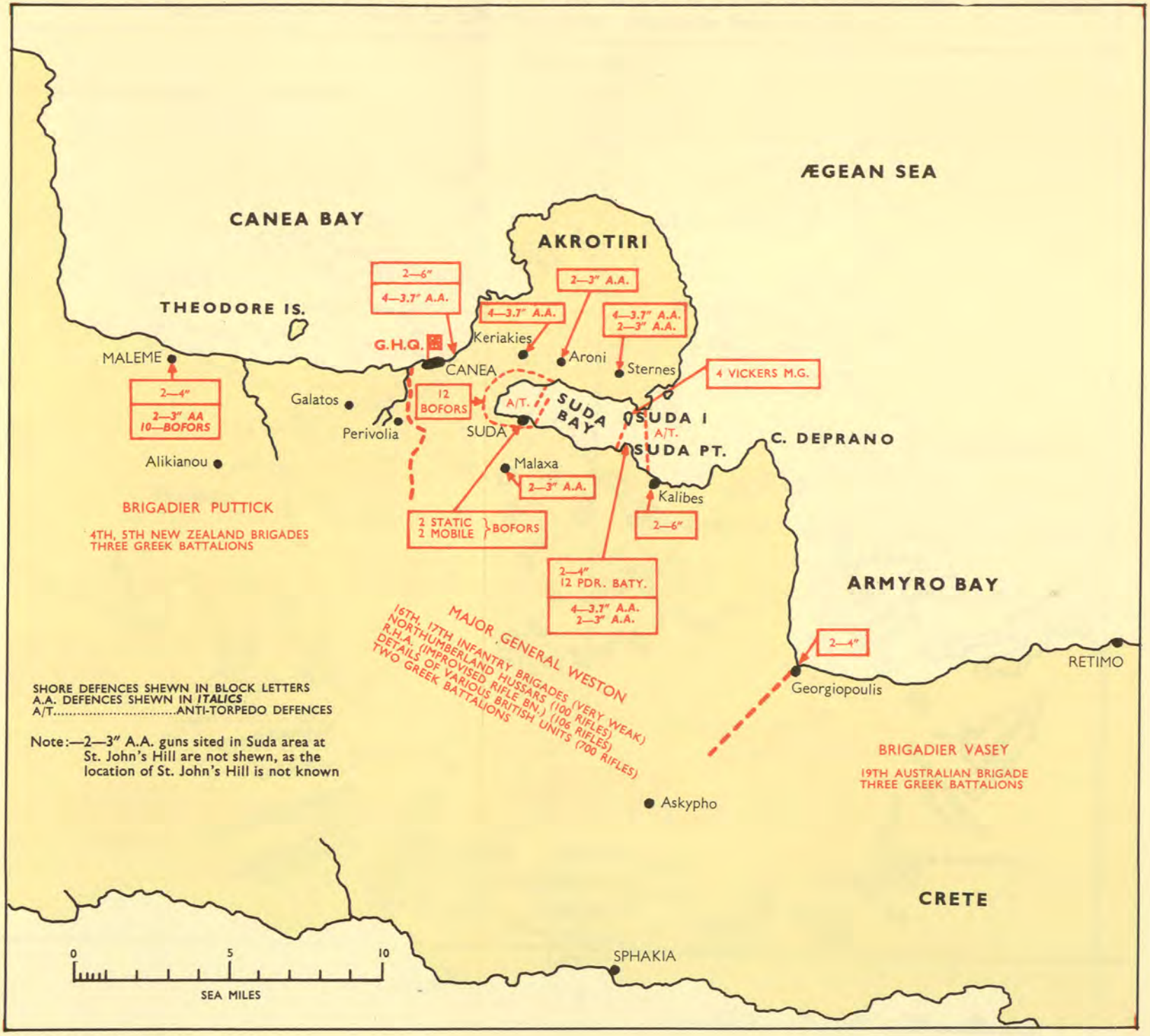
RETIMO-MALEME 20th MAY 1941—PLAN SHOWING FIXED DEFENCES AND MILITARY DEFENCE SECTORS

PLAN 2



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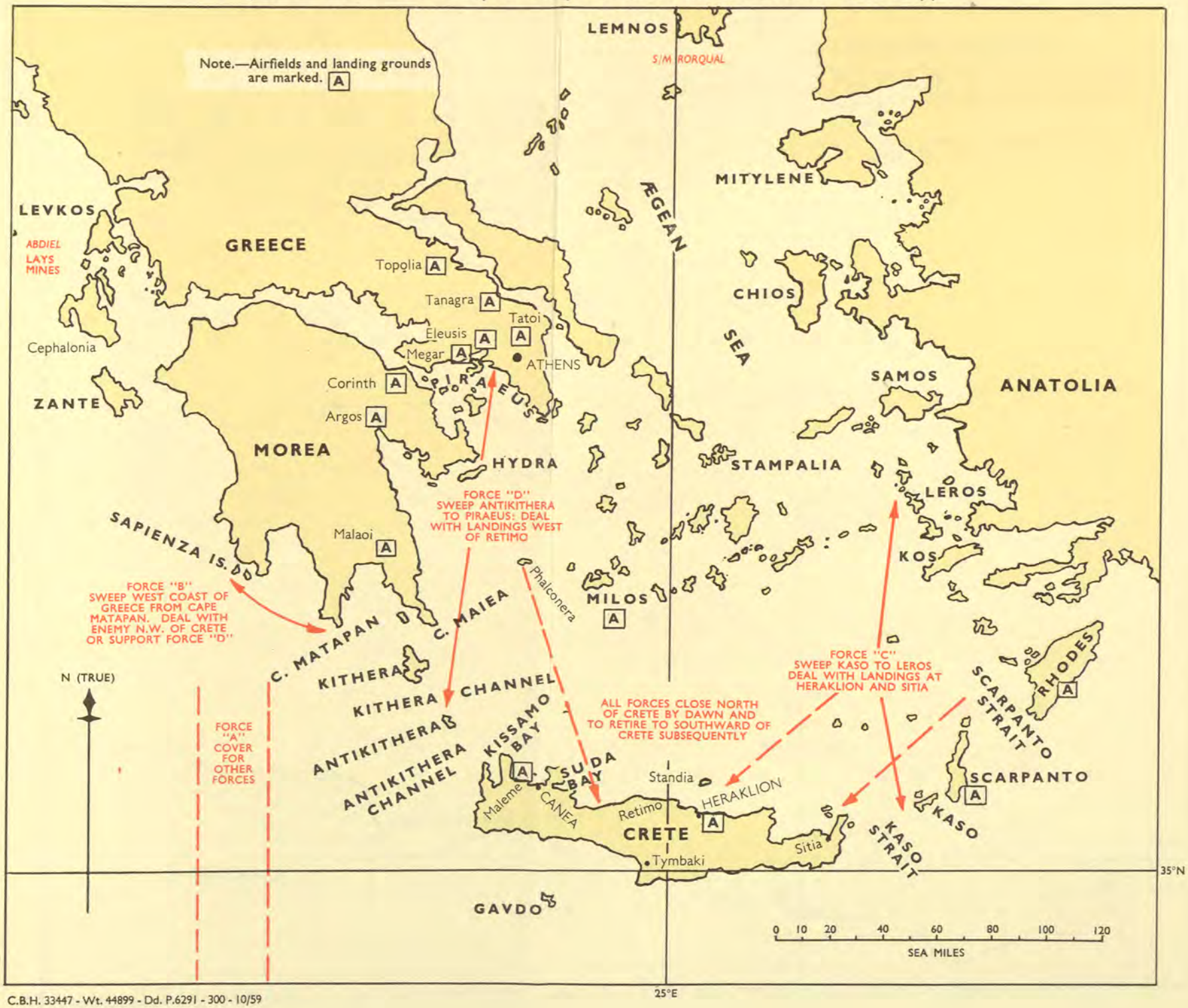
NAVAL PLAN TO COUNTER ANTICIPATED ATTACK ON CRETE MAY 1941

PLAN 3

(Forces were at sea ready to carry out these intentions from 15th May)



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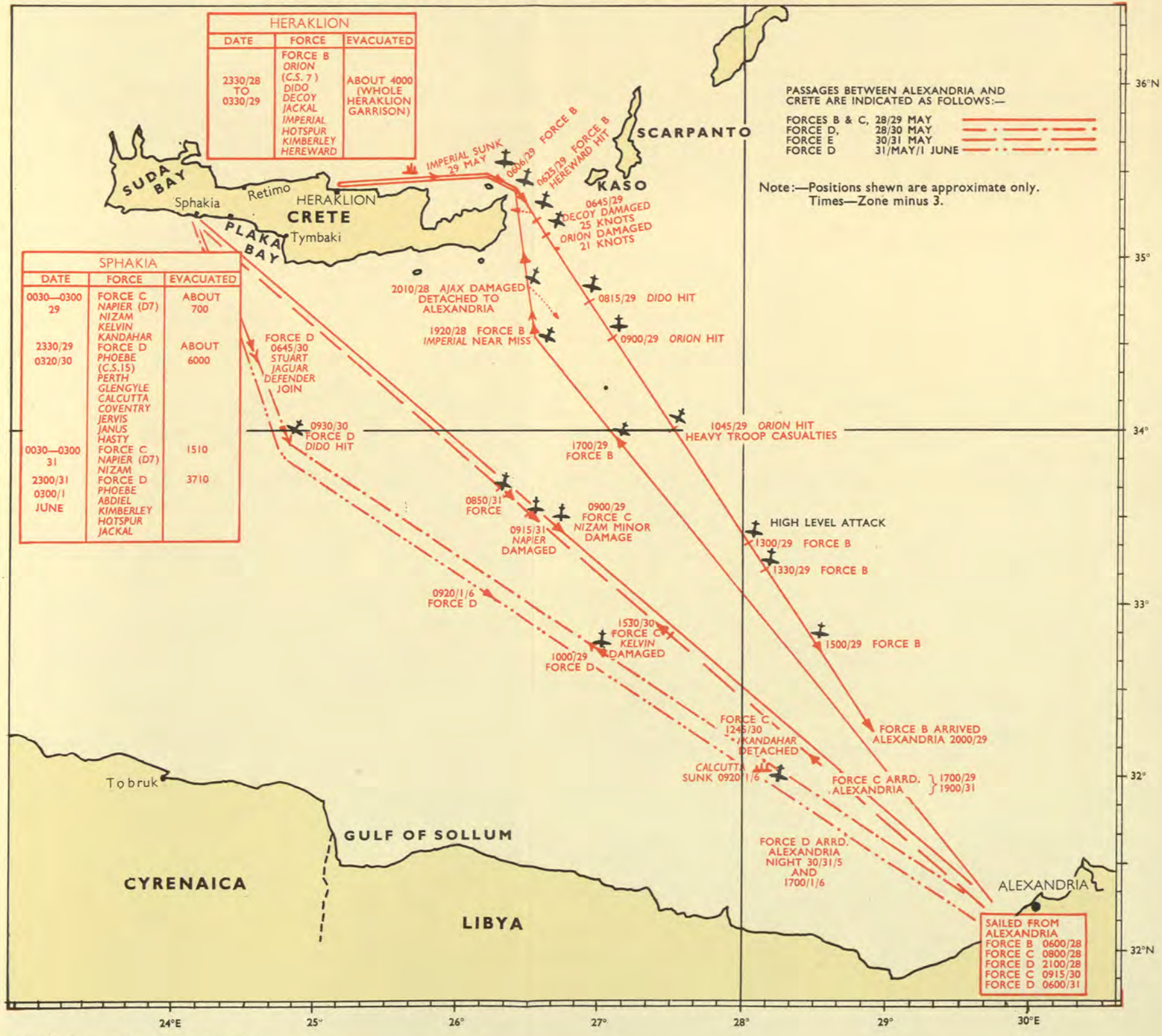
THE EVACUATION OF CRETE, 28th MAY TO 1st JUNE 1941

PLAN 4



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